

CTION BY A. S. BYATT / WHY AMERICA DOESN'T UNDERSTAND MEXICO

The Atlantic Monthly

JULY 1995

THE CRISIS OF

PUBLIC ORDER

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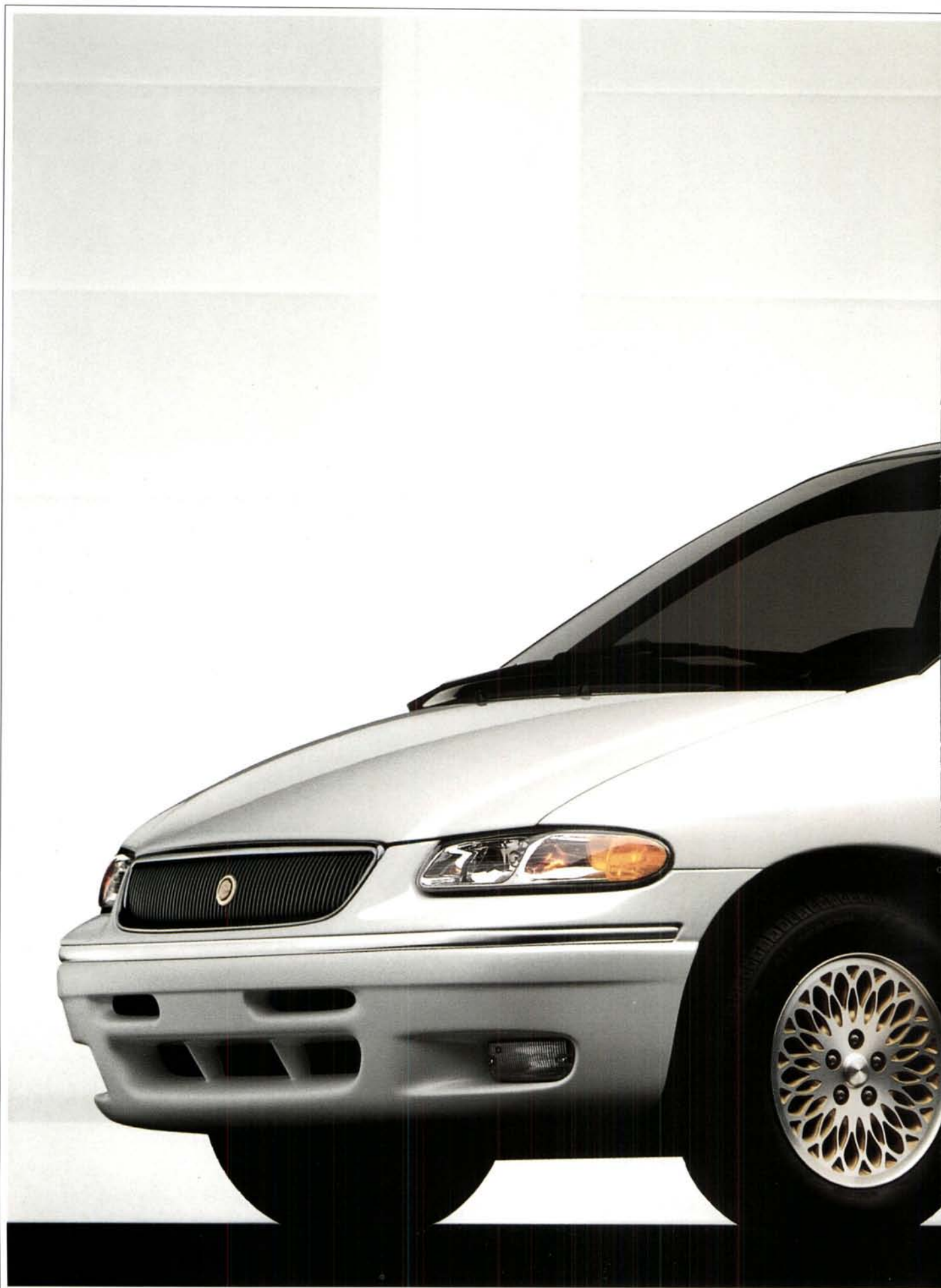
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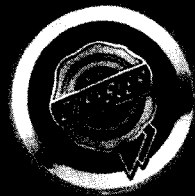
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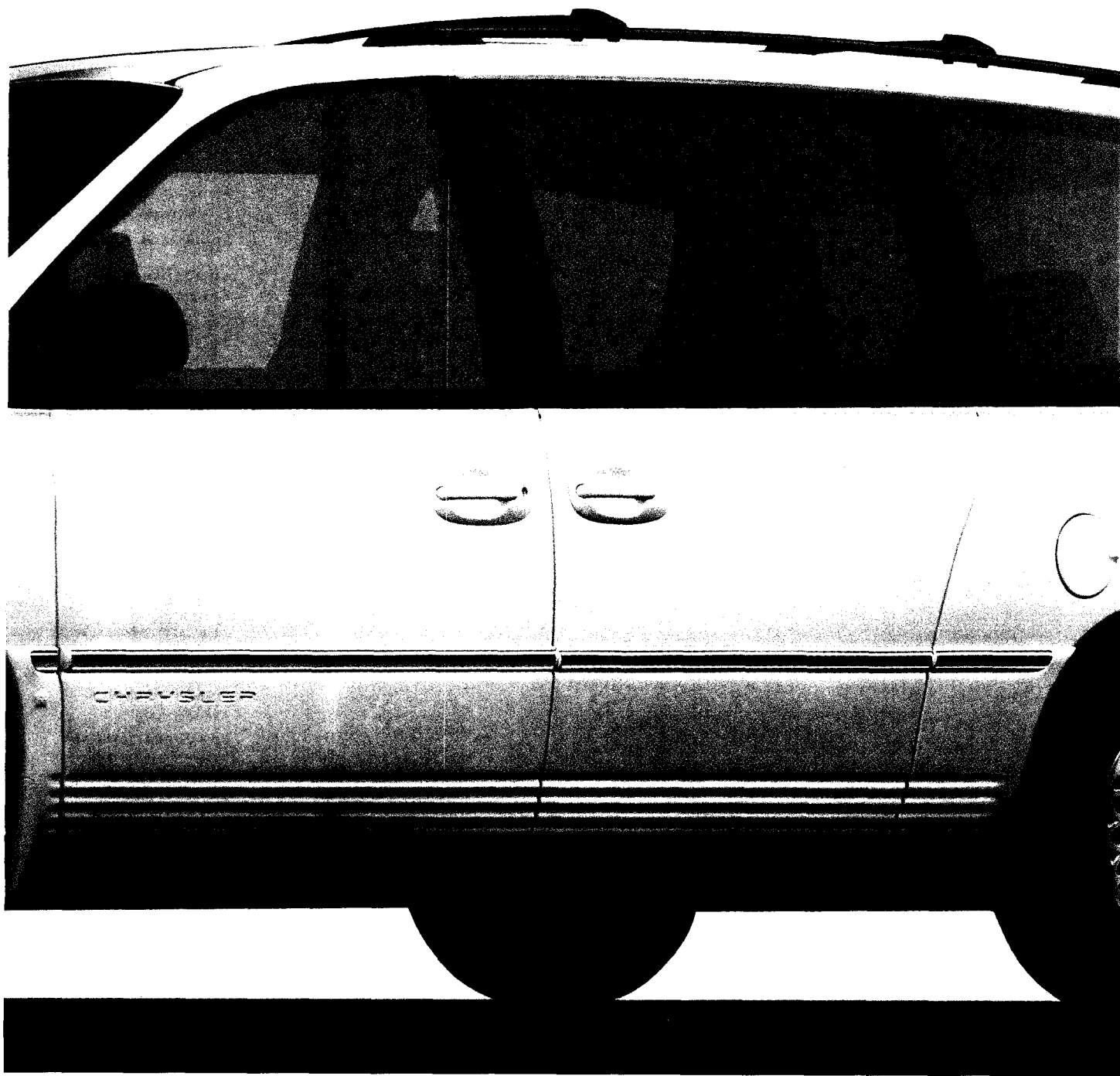
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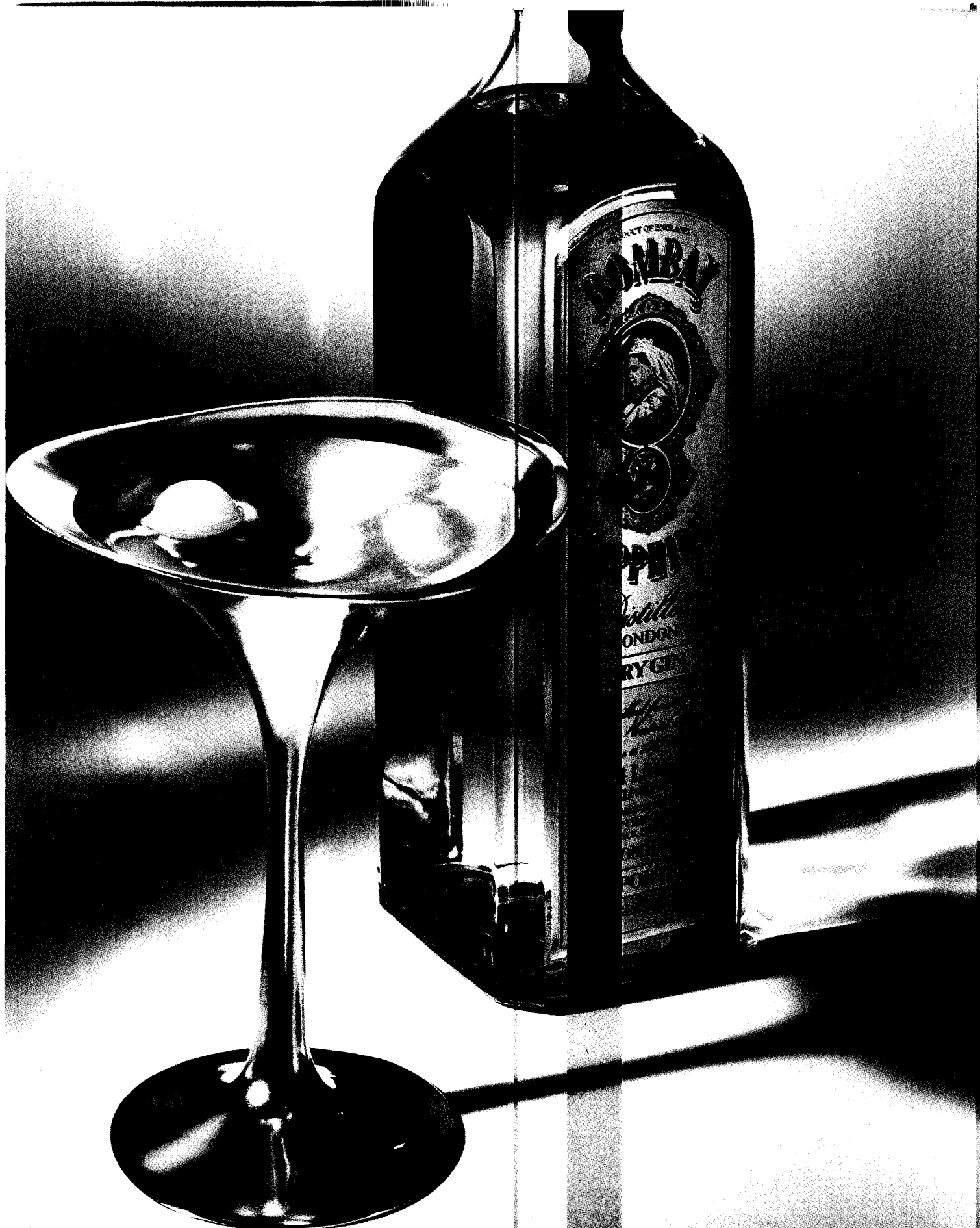
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The Atlantic Monthly (ISSN 0276-9077) is published monthly by The Atlantic Monthly Company, 745 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116 (617-536-9500). Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA, Toronto, Ont., and additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Advertising and Circulation: 1290 Avenue of the Americas, N.Y., N.Y. 10104 (212-830-1900). Subscriptions: \$17.94 for one year, \$29.95 for two years, \$39.95 for three years in the United States and its possessions; \$8.00 additional a year in Canada, includes GST (123209926); \$15.00 additional a year elsewhere. Subscription queries: Atlantic Subscription Processing Center, Box 52661, Boulder, CO 80322. Or call 800-234-2411. Back issues: send \$5.00 per copy to The Atlantic, Back Issues, 200 North 12th St., Newark, NJ 07107. Vol. 276, No. 1, July 1995. Copyright © 1995, by The Atlantic Monthly Company. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Atlantic, Box 52661, Boulder, CO 80322.

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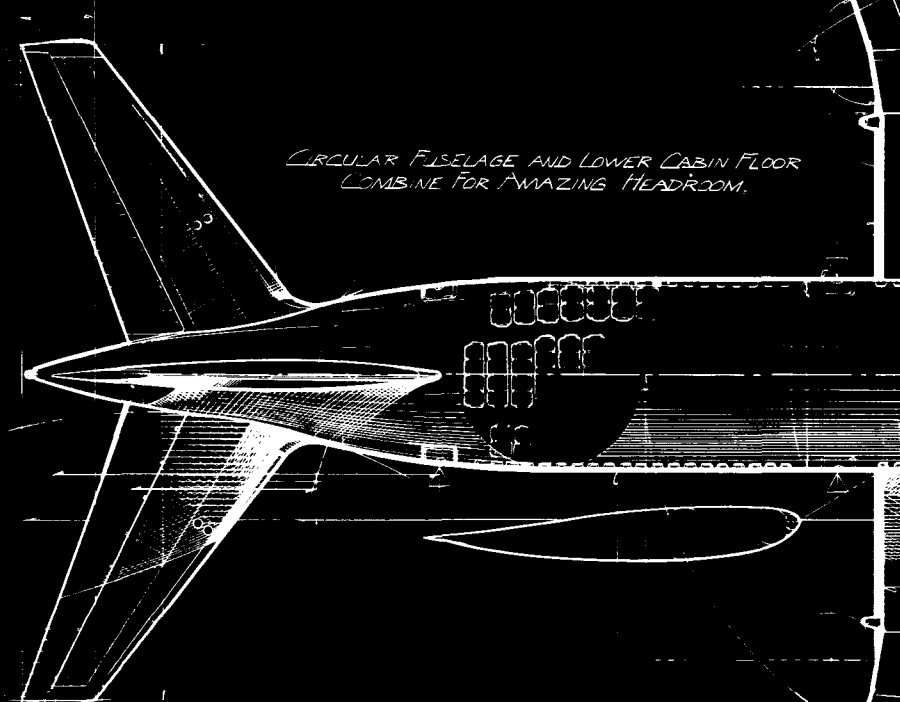


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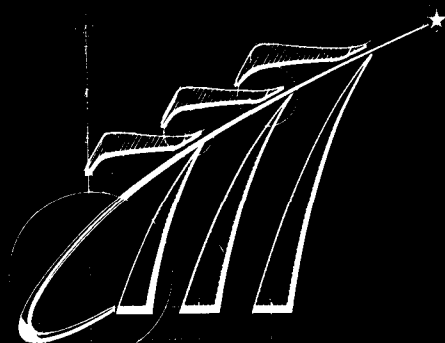
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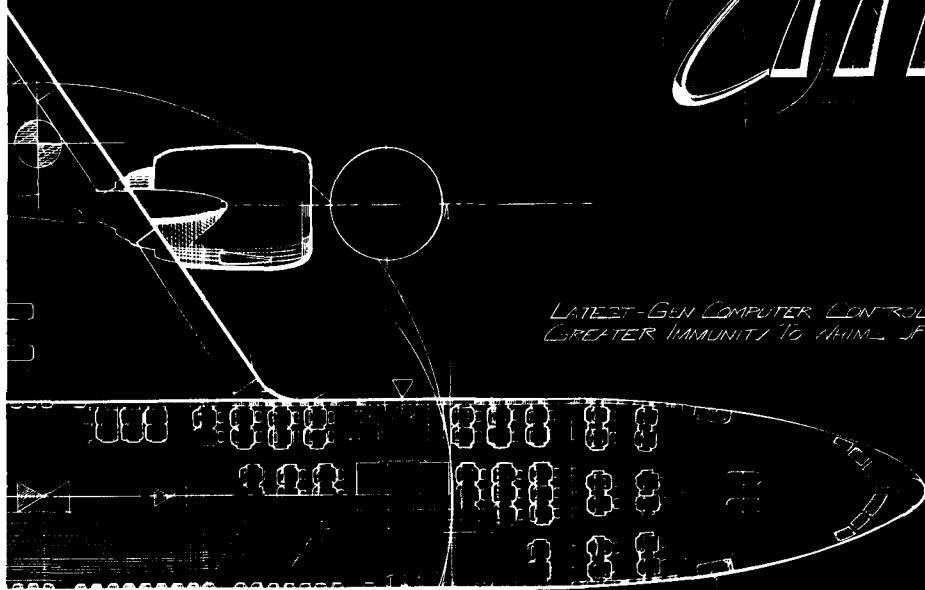


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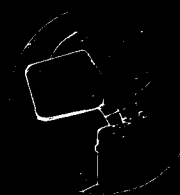
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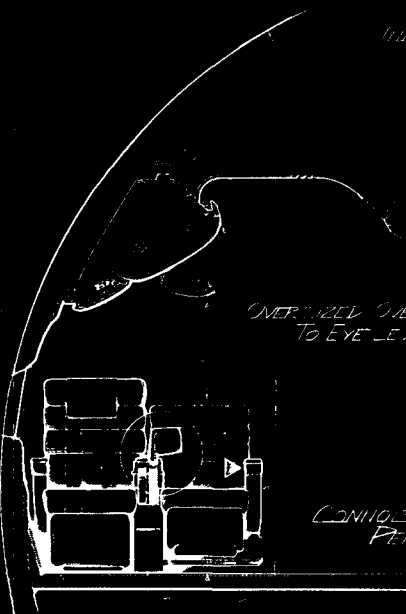
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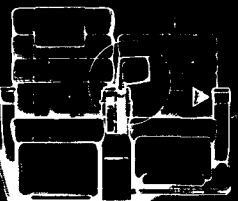


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THE principles of good writing and good editing are the same: clarity, good organization, and style." "Start by asking yourself, What do I want to say?" "Stop to look up a doubtful word in the dictionary when you see it. If you slip by it in a hurry, you won't be able to find the spot later, when you remember that you wondered about its usage or its spelling."

All of this advice came from the pen of Emily Flint, the managing editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Direct, pragmatic, and forceful, it reveals something essential about the character of Flint herself. Robert Manning, a former editor in chief of this magazine, described Flint in his memoir *The Swamp Root Chronicle* as a woman of "formidable tenacity" who was "totally lacking in fear of higher authority." We were saddened to learn that higher authority came for Flint last spring: she died at her home in Bedford, Massachusetts, at the age of eighty-five.

Flint left behind her husband of fifty-nine years, Paul Flint, and a son, Paul Flint Jr.

Flint's remarkable career encompassed much more than magazine journalism. She was a member of the board of trustees of

Barnard College (her alma mater) and of Franklin Pierce College (where the campus center is named in her honor). She was a director and president of the Boston Center for Adult Education. She edited books for Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. In her decades at *The Atlantic* she was a counterforce to casual disorganization and unproductive eccentricity, both occupational illnesses at many a publication. The celebration of this magazine's centennial, in 1957, was an ambitious enterprise, involving the production of a fat special issue and a book. It was Flint on whom the copious details fell, and it was she, along with the editor in chief at the time, Edward Weeks, who undertook the editing of the collection *Jubilee: One Hundred Years of The Atlantic*, a volume that continues to be read with interest around this office.

"It is futile to try to put words on paper until you have done a lot of thinking." "When you write, let your first draft cool at least until after lunch, if possible overnight, before you begin revising." Emily Flint never wrote a word for this magazine under her own name. But for two decades there wasn't a word in it that escaped her eye. —THE EDITORS



Emily Flint and Edward Weeks

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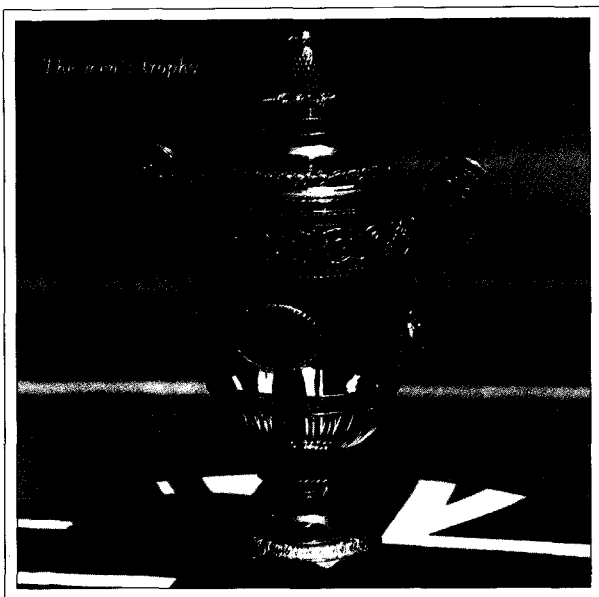
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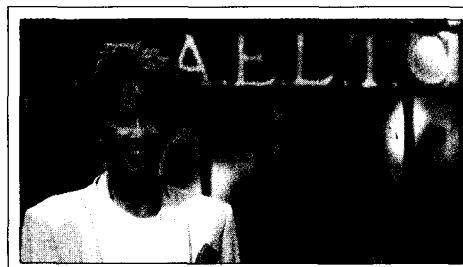
The legend that grew from a lawn in Wimbledon.

In 1869, The All England Croquet Club established itself on four rented acres in Wimbledon. By 1875, the Club had set aside a rectangle of grass for the upstart sport of lawn tennis, which was growing in popularity. Two years later,

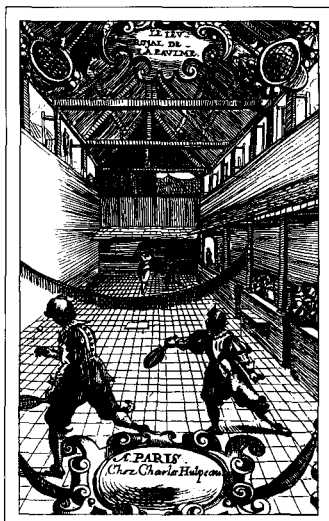
the Club had changed its name to The All England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club. That same year, some 200 spectators watched as 22 amateur players competed for the Challenge Cup, which was awarded to Spencer Gore, the first Wimbledon champion.

Today that legendary lawn, renamed The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in 1889, has expanded to 42 acres, with 18 Championship grass courts, each holding cherished memories.

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Three-time Singles champion Chris Evert, at the gates of The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.



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LETTERS

Christian Science

The editorial statement you wished to make in "Suffering Children and the Christian Science Church" (by Caroline Fraser, April *Atlantic*), that the religious practices of Christian Science families should come under the full purview of the state and its definition of health care, is severely undercut by the manner in which you make it. If one were to choose isolated cases of failure from conventional treatment in hospitals, it would not be difficult to cast a negative and distorted light on the whole medical enterprise.

One example of distorted coverage is the misuse of the statistic that 165 children have died since 1975 because medical care was withheld for religious reasons. The statistic may or may not be accurate; what is omitted is the fact that only a small fraction of these losses were actually the children of Christian Scientists. The author thus presents a skewed picture of Christian Science children doomed to suffer and die.

Since 1984 nine deaths of children from Christian Science families have been brought to court. It's hard to imagine how these losses are disproportionate to the general population, given the fact that an average of 50,000 children under the age of fourteen die under medical treatment every year in this country.

Here are the experiences of three families who relied on Christian Science to heal their children. These cases are vastly more typical for Christian Scientists than those presented in your article.

On October 12, 1983, in Denver, eight-year-old Murray Palmer Hoyt, returning home from a violin lesson, was involved in a serious motor-vehicle accident. Murray was thrown through the windshield of the car and landed on the pavement more than thirty feet from where the vehicle finally came to rest.

The child was taken by emergency

ambulance to Denver General Hospital, where an initial examination showed that he had sustained multiple head injuries including right and left frontotemporal skull fractures with orbital floor fracture. This resulted in medical diagnoses of subconjunctival hemorrhage and commotio retinae. He also suffered a fractured left femur.

His parents, both Christian Scientists, requested that the child be released to their care and stated that they preferred to rely on Christian Science treatment alone for his recovery. The doctors in the emergency-care section said that in life-threatening situations involving minors the state can intervene and decide what kind of care should be given. They stated that if the parents refused, they would get the necessary court order. Reluctantly the parents agreed, but they did call a Christian Science practitioner to give continuing prayerful support.

During the exploratory surgery, the doctors were surprised to discover no internal bleeding. Yet they still felt that Murray needed surgery to relieve pressure on his brain. When his father simply questioned the need for surgery, they reluctantly agreed to wait and make further tests. These additional tests showed enough improvement in Murray's condition that such surgery was never performed. Although it was predicted that he would not live through the night, Murray survived; he was, however, unaware of his surroundings and uncommunicative for a period of four days following the accident.

By the fourth day Murray had regained consciousness. At this point he was transferred from the emergency room to one of the children's wards.

During Murray's stay in the hospital his father ran into Harold B. Vogel, the chief of the neurosurgery division, who had headed up the team of doctors who had treated Murray. Dr. Vogel said, "I just want to let you know your prayers have been most effective in this case.

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There's no way we could have predicted this outcome from the evidence we had and the extent of the injuries your son had at the outset."

Today Murray is a college sophomore.

Daniel Trost, at eighteen months of age, suddenly developed an extremely high fever during the one-hour drive to his grandparents' home in Stanton, Kentucky. By the time he and his parents arrived, his fever was soaring. He suddenly went into convulsions, and his body stiffened. He appeared barely able to breathe, and his face turned blue. Medical treatment was just not available. The nearest hospital was more than forty-five minutes away, in the next county. The grandmother telephoned long-distance to a Christian Science practitioner. Within minutes Daniel responded and resumed breathing normally. His natural color returned. The fever left within a few hours. It returned the next day for a brief time, but it was much less severe. The practitioner prayed again. This time Daniel's healing was complete. Although his father was not a practicing Christian Scientist, he witnessed the healing and acknowledged it. That healing took place almost four years ago. There has been no recurrence of the condition, and today Daniel is a very intelligent and well-developed five-year-old.

In January of 1981, in Dallas, during a prenatal visit to her obstetrician, Linda Bumpus was informed that her baby's head was larger than expected. The doctor performed a sonogram using state-of-the-art equipment. These tests showed dilation of the ventricles and thinning of the cortex due to hydrocephalus. The attending physician, Richard A. Sparr, got in touch with the Christian Science practitioner on the case. He informed her that he foresaw a seriously damaged child who in all likelihood would not live, or would at best be seriously retarded. However, he agreed to order a follow-up sonogram after the practitioner had time to treat the condition specifically. When another sonogram was taken a short time later, it showed absolutely no evidence whatsoever of hydrocephalus. Healing had clearly taken place. On April 25, 1981, an obviously perfect child was born. Dr. Sparr was so excited that the first thing he wanted to do was to telephone the practitioner in the middle of the night to tell her that all was indeed well. Today

Aaron Bumpus is an intelligent and completely normal child, age fourteen.

M. Victor Westberg

*Manager, Committees on Publication
The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Boston, Mass.*

Christian Scientists do not in general fit the profile of blind faith. Their religious views are, in fact, grounded in a pragmatic expectation that a genuine theology must make a difference in the here and now. Spiritual healing in my family has included the healing of a broken collarbone at birth and of spinal meningitis, both diagnosed and verified in a hospital context. Such experiences can no more be dismissed as "anecdotal" than can the wrenching instances of failure recounted in the *Atlantic* article.

It would be unthinkable for those who have had firsthand experiences of radical spiritual healing to go back on what they have seen or deny the implications for healing and for Christian experience alike. But it would be equally irrational to practice or advocate such healing without taking full account of the spiritual commitment and discipline it requires.

Stephen Gottschalk
Wellesley, Mass.

If adult Christian Scientists choose to forgo medical care, that is their choice and their right. They pay the consequences. When parents deny medical care to their children, whose religious rights are being exercised? Not the child's—the child does not have a choice. This is not an exercise of religious freedom; it is an exercise of parental power. The parent chooses and the child pays.

Sean M. Samis
Wauwatosa, Wis.

I have the complete freedom to choose medical treatment for myself or my family but I don't, because I have found that Christian Science treatment is quick and effective. I naturally turn to God in need, and that need is always met. Every member of our Church feels the loss of children and adults who pass on under Christian Science treatment. We don't take these things lightly, nor do we brush them aside. This Church is determined to heal more consistently, more quickly, and with more love than ever before—just as doctors don't give up medicine when it fails

but work to do better. Caroline Fraser's article points out that 165 children have died since 1975 because medical care was withheld for religious reasons (not all were Christian Scientists). Fraser conveniently omits that 53,000 children die *each year* under medical care. This clearly shows that to heal the world's ills, it is going to take all of us.

Richard Biever
State College, Pa.

In my ninety-seven years of living I have never been in a hospital or bothered with diseases. What a joy to know how to pray for anyone whose desire is union with the Infinite Invisible called God, which never fails.

Ruth M. Hamilton
Sanford, Fla.

As a lapsed Scientist, I find it incomprehensible that parents with ailing children who are not being cured by whatever method they are using, mental or otherwise, do not try another method.

Colin Wolfe
Haddonfield, N.J.

I cannot remain silent after reading your April article vilifying Christian Science, which so grossly misrepresents the religion that has been my only physician for forty years since childhood. I must question the fairness and objectivity of an author who rejects out of hand the vast record, often carefully documented, of many thousands of people who have successfully practiced Christian Science healing over many decades. Fraser focuses instead on the handful of tragedies in which healing didn't occur despite Scientists' best efforts—as though medical treatment guaranteed a cure 100 percent of the time.

My family came into Christian Science through the healing of my young sister's polio, medically diagnosed with no cure offered; she was completely cured through Christian Science prayer. Since then she and I and another sister have relied solely on Christian Science for all our physical needs very satisfactorily, raising five children who have always been in excellent health. Christian Scientists ask only the freedom to utilize their system, which has worked so successfully for hundreds of thousands of families over the past hundred years. To discount the entire

teaching of Christian Science because of a handful of failures is patently wrong and cruel.

Suzanne Peniel
South Miami, Fla.

American history is replete with the sad tales of children who have suffered or died because of circumstances surrounding their parents' faith. Perhaps Caroline Fraser would argue that the Pilgrims who were also parents should have remained in England, because of the potential risk to their children of migrating across a hungering ocean to a largely unknown land, or that Mormon mothers and fathers in the 1840s should have renounced their beliefs in order to prevent the cruel deaths that ultimately resulted from hunger, cold, or persecution as they were driven west with their children.

People do occasionally suffer and die for their beliefs. That is part of the cost of having beliefs. Another part is passing those beliefs down from one generation to the next—a process that begins with birth. Parents do not wait until their children reach adulthood before encouraging them to practice the teachings of their inherited faith. For the state to mandate otherwise—except in cases of *commission*, where the parents actually inflict physical or mental injury on the child (instead of cases of *omission*, where parents merely fail to live up to societal norms, as in this case)—is asking for trouble. Moreover, Christian Scientists who do not provide medical care for their children follow their course not out of “complacency,” as Fraser calls it, but because they believe in a higher law. In their best adult judgment, they are acting in the best interests of the child.

Bruce Gelder
West Jordan, Utah

Caroline Fraser replies:

I am saddened but not surprised by the reactions from Christian Scientists and the Christian Science Church to my article describing the suffering endured by children whose parents zealously pursue this faith. Typically, Victor Westberg, a Church spokesman, expresses no sympathy or concern for the actual children whose neglect and deaths I described in detail, and he ignores the issue of the Church's moral and practical responsibility for the fate of those children.

Instead he raises once again the

Church's specious argument that more children die under medical care than under Christian Science care. This is, of course, true, because medical care, despite its limitations, is the accepted mode of health care today, for the very good reason that its results are quantifiable and verifiable. For Westberg to write that “it's hard to imagine how [Christian Science] losses are disproportionate to the general population” is particularly puzzling, given that the Church itself has made it impossible to determine the facts, by refusing to allow statistical study of its practices or their results. Westberg himself told me, “We never keep track of the records of how many [Christian Science] children pass on.” The only relevant question, a question that the Church has never addressed in any way over its entire history, concerns the number of *preventable* deaths among Christian Science children and how that number compares with the number for children who have adequate access to health care. If the Church is so proud of its “scientific” healing record, why doesn't it open up its practices to independent scientific evaluation?

Westberg criticizes as “distorted” my citation of the statistic that 165 children have died since 1975 owing to religiously motivated medical neglect because I omitted the fact that this figure includes victims of sects other than Christian Science. His charge is false; those sects are mentioned in preceding paragraphs. Westberg himself has distorted the facts. The nine Christian Science children whose deaths have been the subject of court cases in this country over the past decade represent only a small fraction of those who have died or have suffered longstanding pain or permanent disability. The religious-exemption laws for which the Church has lobbied have prevented additional criminal prosecutions.

Finally, Stephen Gottschalk's use of such terms as “blind faith” and “anecdotal” is peculiar in the extreme. Christian Science, which encourages its followers to ignore the evidence of the physical senses, is the very definition of blind faith. And, as Gottschalk well knows, the descriptions in the article of the “wrenching instances of failure” of Christian Science treatment are based not on anecdotes, as all Christian Science testimonies are, but on medical and court documents, including death certificates.

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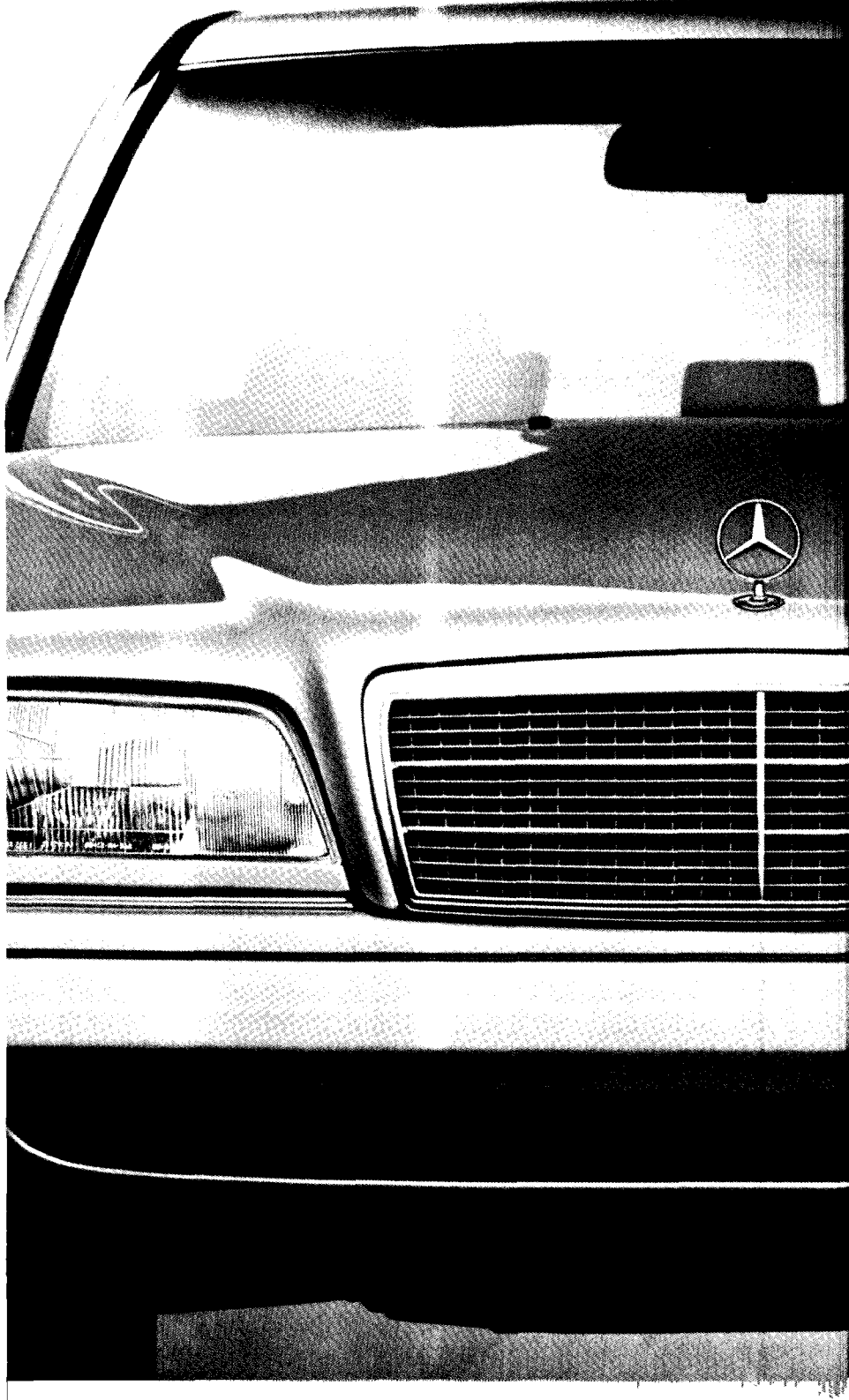
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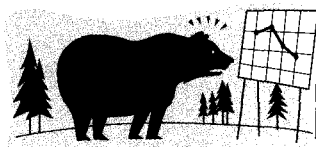


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THE JULY ALMANAC

Government

This month the federal government takes another step toward computerizing government purchasing—a goal outlined in the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994. Most federal agencies already have some ability to post requests for bids and receive bids electronically for contracts under \$50,000. By the end of July they will begin to receive invoices and make credit-card payments electronically as well. The federal government buys about \$200 billion worth of products and services each year. It is estimated that the move to electronic commerce, when complete—the act stipulates that all agencies must be signed on to a government-wide network by January 1, 2000—will save hundreds of millions of dollars a year.



Demographics

If a recent trend continues, visitors to some of America's 332 national parks and recreation sites may have a bit of welcome elbow room this month, traditionally the peak time for park visits. Last year overall park attendance was down for the second consecutive year—a pattern last seen in 1942–1943. Some possible reasons for the decline include the uncertain world economy; changing tastes of Baby Boomers; and publicity about overcrowded conditions. This year, in an ongoing effort to relieve overcrowding at the most congested sites, such as Yosemite Valley and the Grand Canyon (which have not been affected by the decrease in overall attendance), the Park Service will be improving mass-transit systems within some of the parks and limiting private-vehicle access.

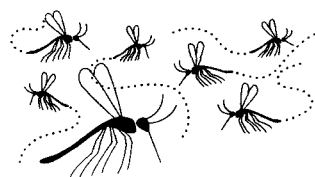


Environment

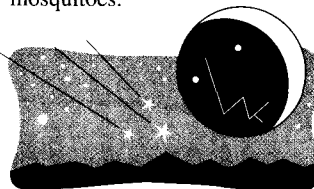
July 1, a Florida ban on virtually all net fishing in inshore and near-shore waters goes into effect today. The ban prohibits the use of gill and other entangling nets as well as any net larger than 500 square feet; the incidental catches captured in such nets, and generally discarded, include most of the animals at the base of the food chain in Florida's estuary ecosystem. Reactions to the ban in nearby states are varied: Louisianans fear an influx of jobless Florida netters, but many Mississippians hope it will bolster their efforts to institute a similar ban. Limits on gill-net use already exist in California, Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington. Netters of a different sort—lepidopterists—will also be on the move this month, as volunteer butterfly enthusiasts around the country conduct the annual July census sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association, meant to aid in conservation and research.

Health & Safety

Mosquito populations nationwide are flourishing this month, and public-health officials are growing increasingly concerned about arthropod-borne diseases long believed to be under control domestically. Cases of malaria originating in the United States had been virtually nonexistent since the 1950s, but several have been documented in the past few years, most recently in Houston last



year. Domestically transmitted cases of dengue fever and various strains of encephalitis have also appeared in states across the country in recent years. Some observers link the outbreaks to budget cuts in mosquito-surveillance, pesticide, and water-management programs; others point to a rise in international travel and a swelling population of immigrants from infested areas (infected people can pass diseases on to mosquitoes that bite them). Further cause for concern: last winter's heavy rains on the West Coast, and generally warm temperatures, which could provide optimal breeding conditions for this summer's mosquitoes.



The Skies

July 8, Jupiter lies just east of the waxing Moon. 12, Full Moon, also known this month as the Mead Moon or the Moon When Cherries Are Ripe. 17, Saturn, which shines with a golden hue, lies south of the waning Moon. 30, the Alpha Capricornids meteor shower peaks tonight. Although it is often overlooked, because it precedes the much more prolific Perseids by only about 12 days, this shower can produce an occasional slow-moving bright fireball with a long path across the sky.

Food

July is the peak season for cultivated blueberries; this year U.S. growers expect to produce more than 86,000 tons, mainly in Michigan and New Jersey (the blueberries that grow in Maine are wild). Although the blueberry is no newcomer to the market (it is one of the dozen or so fruits indigenous to the United States), scientific efforts to improve it are



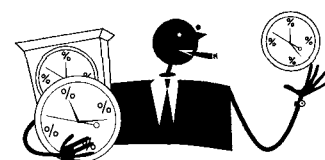
ongoing. Breeders have worked to improve the size, shape, and taste of blueberries and the hardness of the bushes, concentrating in recent years on developing hybrids that will thrive in a variety of soils and climates. Other efforts have focused on eliminating the berry's propensity to stain: a group of horticulturalists at Michigan State University have found and grown an albino "whiteberry," and a Maine scientist has developed a processing method, involving both freezing and massaging blueberries, said to keep them from "bleeding" when cooked.

75 Years Ago

Percival White, writing in the July, 1920, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Efficiency is fondly regarded in the American mind as the greatest contribution of this age to civilization. It is deemed an agency for good, a thing one cannot have too much of. . . .

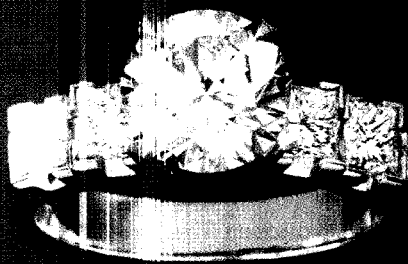
"Efficiency is a lightning calculator, by which you may convert time into anything you like, and read the answer in percentages, to the third decimal place. By its means, for example, you may change minutes into dollars, which is, after all, the thing most of us are trying to do. . . .

"Yet there is danger in these glib conversions. Money is a tangible thing. The more you save, the more you have. But time is far more subtle stuff. Saving it does not imply having it. As soon as a man seriously starts saving time, make up your mind that he will no longer have a moment to spare."



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Let's Do the Hobble

The generation that won't go away

THE great thing about being a Baby Boomer is that you're always at a trendy age. Whatever is on the minds of all those extra people born from 1946 to 1964 is necessarily also on the mind of anybody else who wants to sell to them or get their votes. And as all the world now knows, what's on the Boomers' minds is themselves and their riveting encounters with the routine phases of life.

The 76 million Americans born in those nineteen post-war years were half again as many as had been born in the previous nineteen, and their capacity to make the world their mirror is familiar. When, as teenagers, they got wind of the imperfection of the adult-organized world, they generated the youth revolution and The Sixties. In succeeding decades the planet has reverberated to their post-adolescent quest for money and physical fitness, their amazed discovery of pregnancy and parenthood, and their forty-ish insight that there must be more to life than money and physical fitness. Next year the first wave of Boomers will turn fifty. Before long tens of millions will be in their fifties and—in another historical twinkling—their sixties. Ready or not, they are certain to usher in an era in which it will be not just okay to be fifty-five or sixty-five but fascinating and fashionable—hip, even. Ken Dychtwald, whose 1989 book and California-based, Boomer-oriented marketing company are both called Age Wave, puts it this way: “The lure and power and sheer weight of this generation will pull the epicenter of American consciousness up with it. I think it will not only be fashionable to be old, but we'll find ways to describe how unhip and unfashionable—just untogether!—it is to be in your twenties and thirties.”

The wind already bears straws. On the best-seller lists, the

magazine racks, and the talk shows, menopause is cool in the nineties. Big, presbyopia-friendly numbers are a fad on calculators and phone buttons. On the pop charts and the megaconcert circuit the Rolling Stones and others nearer sixty than thirty are resurgent.

For trend projectors, the long-term possibilities are boundless. Wrinkle chic? A great new augmentation opportunity for plastic surgeons. Even louder rock groups for the hearing-impaired? Dump all those old CDs. Upwardly mobile nonagenarians? Have your nurse call my nurse.

■ ■ ■

From the sexual revolution to the health-club boom and beyond, the enthusiasms of the Boomers have reflected their physical changes—and their penchant for philosophizing about them. The physical changes ahead will be harder to celebrate, but there may be

a way. Sometimes, even in health matters, wishing can make things so—especially when a mass market makes the wish.

Already the experience of being fifty, sixty, or seventy is much different on average from what it was even a few decades ago, thanks to medical, economic, and perhaps educational progress. Marketers are trying to catch up. The American Association of Retired Persons is planning to launch a separate edition of its bimonthly *Modern Maturity* for younger members—starting at age fifty. Elsewhere the autumnal style of traditional pitches for fifty-plus items, from health insurance to Cadillacs, has brightened.

According to the TV executive Grant Tinker, “After fifty any news you get about your body is always bad news.” If the past is any guide, the postwar generation will not suffer the news in silence. What Dychtwald calls their “generational wailing” is



by William S. Rukeyser



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bound to get the attention of corporate and government funders of medical research. And to a startling degree authorities on the physical problems of the aging and the aged are optimistic about the ability of medical researchers to produce what's demanded.

Robert N. Butler, M.D., is bemused but enthusiastic about the prospect that geriatrics, the specialty he has pursued through forty comparatively lonesome years, is about to take center stage. Moving fast at sixty-eight, Butler heads what he says is still the only department of geriatrics and adult development in a U.S. medical school, at Mount Sinai in New York City. He is a former director of the National Institute on Aging and the author of *Love and Sex After 60* and *Why Survive? Being Old in America*, for which he won a 1976 Pulitzer Prize.

Butler anticipates substantial relief in the years just ahead for a wide array of the conditions that have heretofore caused so few young people to wish that they were in their fifties or sixties. Examples:

- Menopause. For many menopausal and postmenopausal women hormone-replacement therapy reduces or eliminates emotional and physical symptoms. Studies suggest that estrogen supplements may also enhance the integrity of bone, averting osteoporosis, and may even help prevent heart disease; lack of the hormone may well be one of the reasons that women after menopause begin to catch up with men in rate of heart disease. Questions about a possible link between estrogen and breast cancer could be resolved soon by large studies under way as part of the Women's Health Initiative at the National Institutes of Health.
- Prostate enlargement. "I think we will have biological regulators that will alter the rates of growth of various biological systems—not only prostatic glandular tissue but other tissues as well," Butler says. "I'm talking now in a time frame that could affect the Baby Boomers—ten or twenty years."
- Wrinkles and lines. Retin-A and other vitamin-A derivatives can partly rejuvenate skin, not just moisturize it, and, Butler says, "with reductions in exposure to sunlight and in tobacco use, we'll have skin improvements even without Retin-A."
- Baldness. Minoxidil (Rogaine), the only substance federally acknowledged to be capable of growing hair, will probably be joined by other, more generally effective treatments.
- Arthritis. New ways of regulating the immune system promise to control this and similar ailments.

Of course, even if all these advances materialize, the Boomers will have their share of health worries. Most Americans of every generation are out of shape. "Unfortunately," Butler says, "it's a small percentage of Baby Boomers who have really used the health clubs or run in the park. And no more than nine percent of Americans actually eat anything like the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables every day."

Rock-and-roll may be forever, but intimations of mortality are floating in from the rock-and-rollers. The Eagles and Crosby, Stills and Nash had to break off national tours last summer: Glenn Frey, of the Eagles, needed surgery for diverticulitis, and David Crosby had a liver transplant. Mick Jagger seems ad-

mirably fit, but the Rolling Stones now appear to have a retirement program. Their bassist, Bill Wyman, has officially ceased work, possibly to read *Modern Maturity*. He's fifty-eight.

■ ■ ■

The majority of Boomers will not be retired or critically ill anytime soon. Instead they will continue to be heroes and heroines of the popular culture that depends on them for support. Boom watchers in business, medicine, the media, and elsewhere tend to agree that certain characteristics make Boomers plausible candidates to be trendsetters as fiftysomethings and beyond:

They will be active. By choice and necessity, they are likely to stay busier than previous generations, both on and off the job. The Boomers have been the first cohort to spend their careers in an industrialized world in which most jobs are not in factories or fields—settings in which physical decline typically dictated retirement by sixty or sixty-five. Sports opportunities will expand: for example, next year the government of Bermuda, the Marriott Corporation, the Institute for International Sport, and Robert Butler's geriatrics department at Mount Sinai plan to sponsor the first International Senior Games, for athletes over fifty.

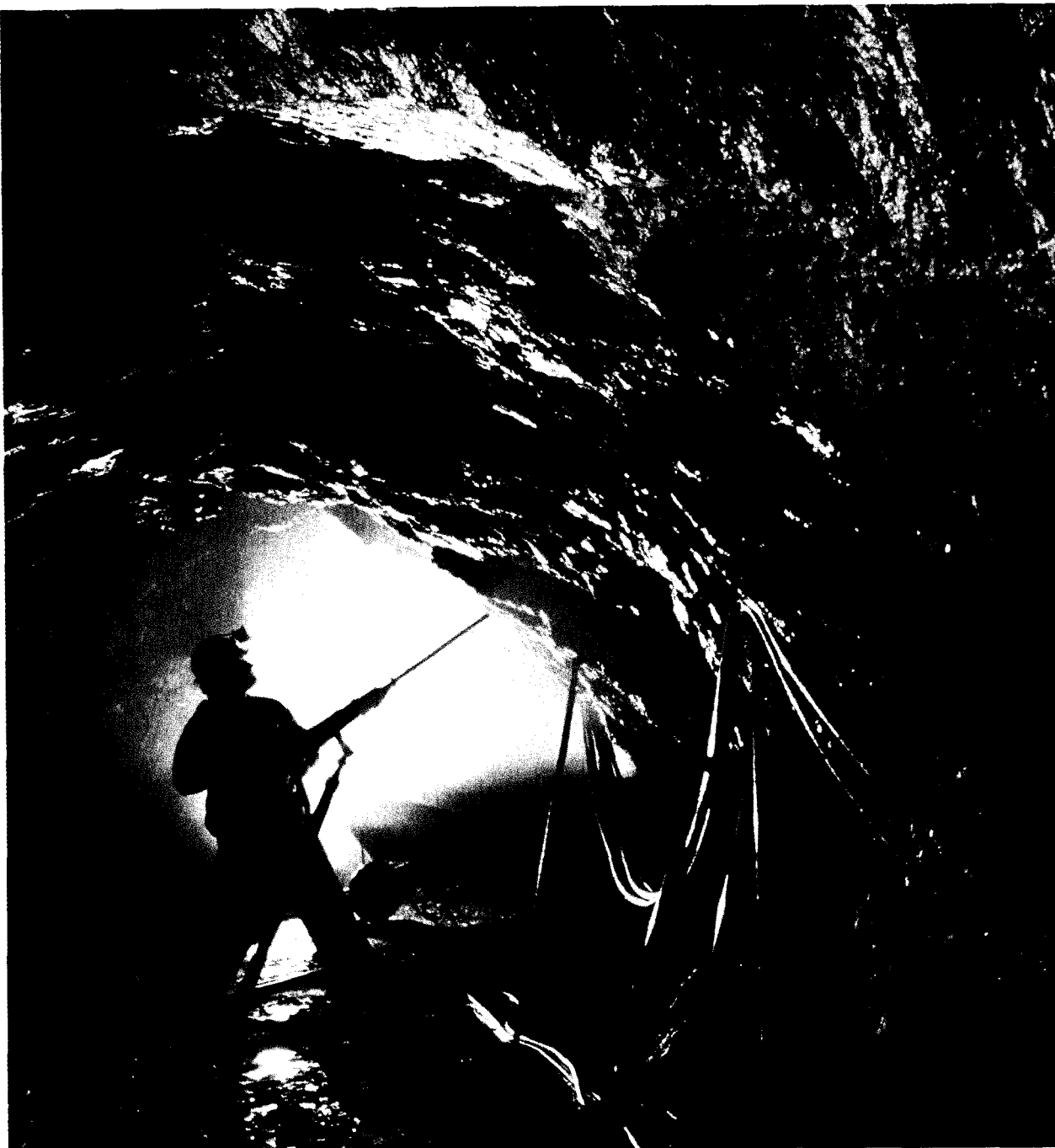
They will be unpredictable. The bumps of the global economy will continue to require career improvisation. Stories of middle-aged comebacks, metamorphoses, and late blooming will multiply in daily life and in the media. With an average of twenty-five or thirty years of life ahead, Boomers in their fifties will avidly pursue self-improvement. Indeed, Denise Caruso, a former editor of the newsletter *Technology & Media*, thinks that new forms of adult education, enhanced by multimedia creativity, could be the sleeper attraction that finally lures masses of consumers onto the so-called information superhighway.

They will be sexy. In the role-model factories of Hollywood, the music business, and the ad agencies, the old teenage ideal will continue to recede in favor of newly magnetic traits such as maturity, mastery, and accomplishment. As the trend scout John Naisbitt sees it, "All the rules we have for relationships were rooted in a time when the life expectancy of a human being was thirty-eight years. One of the things I think is going to become okay is for Grandma to divorce Grandpa and marry somebody else."

They will more often be led by women. An aphrodisiac available to many more women will be power. In their late forties, this first wave of women for whom career employment has been the norm are at the traditional age to win top jobs in government, the professions, and big business. Glass ceiling or no, quite a few have already done so, and many more surely will.

They will come into money. The average Boomer will have the pleasure of his long-lived parents' company for years to come. Then the pain of loss will be accompanied for a surprising number of graying Boomers by jackpot inheritances. Thanks to their Depression-bred penchant for saving and to the heyday of government and corporate pension plans, Boomers' parents are the wealthiest old people ever.

They will continue to make their own rules. Decades from now, if demonstrations break out in cemeteries, no one should be surprised if the chant turns out to be "Hell, no, we won't go!" ☛



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Was It Right?

Most of the debate over the atomic bombing of Japan focuses on the unanswerable question of whether it was necessary. But that skirts the question of its morality

IMAGINE that the persistence of that question irritated Harry Truman above all other things. The atomic bombs that destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fifty years ago were followed in a matter of days by the complete surrender of the Japanese empire and military forces, with only the barest fig leaf of a condition—an American promise not to molest the Emperor. What

by Thomas Powers

more could one ask from an act of war? But the two bombs each killed at least 50,000 people and perhaps as many as 100,000. Numerous attempts have been made to estimate the death toll, counting not only those who died on the first day and over the following week or two but also the thousands who died later of cancers thought to have been caused by radiation. The exact number of

dead can never be known, because whole families—indeed, whole districts—were wiped out by the bombs; because the war had created a floating population of refugees throughout Japan; because certain categories of victims, such as conscript workers from Korea, were excluded from estimates by Japanese authorities; and because as time went by, it became harder to know which deaths had indeed been caused by the bombs. However many died, the victims were overwhelmingly civilians, primarily the old, the young, and women; and all the belligerents formally took the position that the killing of civilians violated both the laws of war and common precepts of humanity. Truman shared this reluctance to be thought a killer of civilians. Two weeks before Hiroshima he wrote of the bomb in his diary, “I have told [the Secretary of War] Mr. Stimson to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. . . .” The first reports on August 6, 1945, accordingly described Hiroshima as a Japanese army base.

This fiction could not stand for long. The huge death toll of ordinary Japanese citizens, combined with the horror of so many deaths by fire, eventually cast a moral shadow over the triumph of ending the war with two bombs. The horror soon began to weigh on the conscience of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific director of the secret research project at Los Alamos, New Mexico, that designed and built the first bombs. Oppenheimer not only had threatened his health with three years of unremitting overwork to build the bombs but also had soberly advised Henry Stimson that no conceivable demonstration of the bomb could have the shattering psychological impact of its actual use. Oppenheimer himself gave an Army officer heading for the Hiroshima raid last-minute instructions for proper delivery of the bomb.

Don't let them bomb through clouds or through an overcast. Got to see the target. No radar bombing; it must be dropped visually. . . . Of course, they must not drop it in rain or fog. Don't let them detonate it too high. The figure fixed on is just right. Don't let it go up or the target won't get as much damage.

These detailed instructions were the result of careful committee work by Oppenheimer and his colleagues. Mist or rain would absorb the heat of the bomb blast and thereby limit the conflagration, which experiments with city bombing in both Germany and Japan had shown to be the principal agent of casualties and destruction. Much thought had also been given to finding the right city. It should be in a valley, to contain the blast; it should be relatively undamaged by conventional air raids, so that there would be no doubt of the bomb's destructive power; an educated citizenry was desired, so that it would understand the enormity of what had happened. The military director of the bomb project, General Leslie Groves, thought the ancient Japanese imperial capital of Kyoto would be ideal, but Stimson had spent a second honeymoon in Kyoto, and was afraid that the Japanese would never forgive or forget its wanton destruction; he flatly refused to leave the city on the target list. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed instead.

On the night of August 6 Oppenheimer was thrilled by the bomb's success. He

told an auditorium filled with whistling, cheering, foot-stomping scientists and technicians that he was sorry only that the bomb had not been ready in time for use on Germany. The adrenaline of triumph drained away following the destruction of Nagasaki, on August 9. Oppenheimer soon offered his resignation and by mid-October had severed his official ties. Some months later he told Truman in the White House, "Mr. President, I have blood on my hands."

Truman was disgusted by this cry-baby attitude. "I told him," Truman said later, "the blood was on my hands—let me worry about that."

Till the end of his life Truman insisted that he had suffered no agonies of regret over his decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the pungency of his language suggests that he meant what he said. But it is also true that he ordered a halt to the atomic bombing on August 10, four days before the Japanese Emperor surrendered, and the reason, according to a Cabinet member present at the meeting, was that "he didn't like the idea of killing . . . 'all those kids.'"

WAS it right? Harry Truman isn't the only one to have disliked the question. Historians of the war, of the invention of the atomic bomb, and of its use on Japan have almost universally chosen to skirt the question of whether killing civilians can be morally justified. They ask instead, Was it necessary?

Those who say it was necessary argue that a conventional invasion of Japan, scheduled to begin on the southernmost island of Kyushu on November 1, 1945, would have cost the lives of large numbers of Americans and Japanese alike. Much ink has been spilled over just how large these numbers would have been. Truman in later life sometimes said that he had used the atomic bomb to save the lives of half a million or even a million American boys who might have died in an island-by-island battle to the bitter end for the conquest of Japan.

Where Truman got those numbers is hard to say. In the spring of 1945, when it was clear that the final stage of the war was at hand, Truman received a letter from former President Herbert Hoover urging him to negotiate an end to the war in order to save the "500,000 to 1 million American lives" that might be lost in an

invasion. But the commander of the invasion force, General Douglas MacArthur, predicted nothing on that scale. In a paper prepared for a White House strategy meeting held on June 18, a month before the first atomic bomb was tested, MacArthur estimated that he would suffer about 95,000 casualties in the first ninety days—a third of them deaths. The conflict of estimates is best explained by the fact that they were being used at the time as weapons in a larger argument. Admirals William Leahy and Ernest J. King thought that Japan could be forced to surrender by a combination of bombing and naval blockade. Naturally they inflated the number of casualties that their strate-

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Truman said later.*

gy would avoid. MacArthur and other generals, convinced that the war would have to be won on the ground, may have deliberately guessed low to avoid frightening the President.

It was not easy to gauge how the battle would go. From any conventional military perspective, by the summer of 1945 Japan had already lost the war. The Japanese navy mainly rested on the bottom of the ocean; supply lines to the millions of Japanese soldiers in China and other occupied territories had been severed; the Japanese air force was helpless to prevent the almost nightly raids by fleets of B-29 bombers, which had been systematically burning Japanese cities since March; and Japanese petroleum stocks were close to gone. The battleship *Yamato*, dispatched on a desperate mission to Okinawa in April of 1945, set off without fuel enough to return.

But despite this hopeless situation the Japanese military was convinced that a "decisive battle" might inflict so many casualties on Americans coming ashore

in Kyushu that Truman would back down and grant important concessions to end the fighting. Japan's hopes were pinned on "special attack forces," a euphemism for those engaged in suicide missions, such as *kamikaze* planes loaded with explosives plunging into American ships, as had been happening since 1944. During the spring and summer of 1945 about 8,000 aircraft, along with one-man submarines and "human torpedoes," had been prepared for suicide missions, and the entire Japanese population had been exhorted to fight, with bamboo spears if necessary, as "One Hundred Million Bullets of Fire." Military commanders were so strongly persuaded that honor and even victory might yet be achieved by the "homeland decisive battle" that the peace faction in the Japanese cabinet feared an order to surrender would be disobeyed. The real question is not whether an invasion would have been a ghastly human tragedy, to which the answer is surely yes, but whether Hoover, Leahy, King, and others were right when they said that bombing and blockade would end the war.

Here the historians are on firm ground. American cryptanalysts had been reading high-level Japanese diplomatic ciphers and knew that the government in Tokyo was eagerly pressing the Russians for help in obtaining a negotiated peace. The sticking point was narrow: the Allies insisted on unconditional surrender; the Japanese peace faction wanted assurances that the imperial dynasty would remain. Truman knew this at the time.

What Truman did not know, but what has been well established by historians since, is that the peace faction in the Japanese cabinet feared the utter physical

destruction of the Japanese homeland, the forced removal of the imperial dynasty, and an end to the Japanese state. After the war it was also learned that Emperor Hirohito, a shy and unprepossessing man of forty-four whose first love was marine biology, felt pressed to intervene by his horror at the bombing of Japanese cities. The devastation of Tokyo left by a single night of firebomb raids on March 9–10, 1945, in which 100,000 civilians died, had been clearly visible from the palace grounds for months thereafter. It is further known that the intervention of the Emperor at a special meeting, or *gozen kaigin*, on the night of August 9–10 made it possible for the government to surrender.

The Emperor's presence at a *gozen kaigin* is intended to encourage participants to put aside all petty considerations, but at such a meeting, according to tradition, the Emperor does not speak or express any opinion whatever. When the cabinet could not agree on whether to surrender or fight on, the Premier, Kantaro Suzuki, broke all precedent and left the military men speechless when he addressed Hirohito and said, "With the greatest reverence I must now ask the Emperor to express his wishes."

Of course, this had been arranged by the two men beforehand. Hirohito cited the suffering of his people and concluded, "The time has come when we must bear the unbearable." After five days of further confusion, in which a military coup was barely averted, the Emperor broadcast a similar message to the nation at large in which he noted that "the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb. . . ."

Are those historians right who say that the Emperor would have submitted if the atomic bomb had merely been demonstrated in Tokyo Bay, or had never been used at all?

Questions employing the word "if" lack rigor, but it is very probable that the use of the atomic bomb only confirmed the Emperor in a decision he had already reached. What distressed him was the destruction of Japanese cities, and every night of good bombing weather brought the obliteration by fire of another city. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and several other cities had been spared from B-29 raids and therefore offered good atomic-bomb targets. But Truman had no need to use the atomic bomb, and he did not have to

invade. General Curtis LeMay had a firm timetable in mind for the 21st Bomber Command; he had told General H. H. ("Hap") Arnold, the commander in chief of the Army Air Corps, that he expected to destroy all Japanese cities before the end of the fall. Truman need only wait. Steady bombing, the disappearance of one city after another in fire storms, the death of another 100,000 Japanese civilians every week or ten days, would sooner or later have forced the cabinet, the army, and the Emperor to bear the unbearable.

WAS it right? The bombing of cities in the Second World War was the result of several factors: the desire to strike enemies from afar and thereby avoid the awful trench-war slaughter of 1914–1918; the industrial capacity of the Allies to build great bomber fleets; the ability of German fighters and anti-aircraft to shoot down attacking aircraft that flew by daylight or at low altitudes; the inability of bombers to strike targets accurately from high altitudes; the difficulty of finding all but very large targets (that is, cities) at night; the desire of air-men to prove that air forces were an important military arm; the natural hardening of hearts in wartime; and the relative absence of people willing to ask publicly if bombing civilians was right.

"Strategic bombing" got its name between the wars, when it was the subject of much discussion. Stanley Baldwin made a deep impression in the British House of Commons in 1932 when he warned ordinary citizens that bombing would be a conspicuous feature of the next war and that "the bomber will always get through."

This proved to be true, although getting through was not always easy. The Germans soon demonstrated that they could shoot down daytime low-altitude "precision" bombers faster than Britain could build new planes and train new crews. By the second year of the war the British Bomber Command had faced the facts and was flying at night, at high altitudes, to carry out "area bombing." The second great discovery of the air war was that high-explosive bombs did not do as much damage as fire. Experiments in 1942 on medieval German cities on the Baltic showed that the right approach was high-explosive bombs first, to smash up houses for kindling and break win-

The ferocity of the air war adopted against Germany was redoubled against Japan, which was even better suited for fire raids.

dows for drafts, followed by incendiaries, to set the whole alight. If enough planes attacked a small enough area, they could create a fire storm—a conflagration so intense that it would begin to burn the oxygen in the air, creating hundred-mile-an-hour winds converging on the base of the fire. Hamburg was destroyed in the summer of 1943 in a single night of unspeakable horror that killed perhaps 45,000 Germans.

While the British Bomber Command methodically burned Germany under the command of Sir Arthur Harris (called Bomber Harris in the press but Butch—short for “Butcher”—by his own men), the Americans quietly insisted that they would have no part of this slaughter but would instead attack “precision” targets with “pinpoint” bombing. But American confidence was soon eroded by daylight disasters, including the mid-1943 raid on ball-bearing factories in Schweinfurt, in which sixty-three of 230 B-17s were destroyed for only paltry results on the ground. Some Americans continued to criticize British plans for colossal city-busting raids as “baby-killing schemes,” but by the end of 1943, discouraged by runs of bad weather and anxious to keep planes in the air, the commander of the American Air Corps authorized bombing “by radar”—that is, attacks on cities, which radar could find through cloud cover.

The ferocity of the air war eventually adopted by the United States against Germany was redoubled against Japan, which was even better suited for fire raids, because so much of the housing was of paper and wood, and worse suited for “precision” bombing, because of its awful weather and unpredictable winds at high altitudes. On the night of March 9–10, 1945, General LeMay made a bold experiment: he stripped his B-29s of armament to increase bomb load and flew at low altitudes. As already described, the experiment was a brilliant success. By the time of Hiroshima more than sixty of Japan’s largest cities had been burned, with a death toll in the hundreds of thousands.

No nation could long resist destruction on such a scale—a conclusion formally reached by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey in its *Summary Report (Pacific War)*: “Japan would have surrendered [by late 1945] even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if

Russia had not entered the war [on August 8], and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.”

WAS it right? There is an awkward, evasive cast to the internal official documents of the British and American air war of 1939–1945 that record the shift in targets from factories and power plants and the like toward people in cities. Nowhere was the belief ever baldly confessed that if we killed enough people, they would give up; but that is what was meant by the phrase “morale bombing,” and in the case of Japan it worked. The mayor of Nagasaki recently compared the crime of the destruction of his city to the genocide of the Holocaust, but whereas comparisons—and especially this one—are invidious, how could the killing of 100,000 civilians in a day for a political purpose ever be considered anything but a crime?

Fifty years of argument over the crime against Hiroshima and Nagasaki has disguised the fact that the American war against Japan was ended by a larger crime in which the atomic bombings were only a late innovation—the killing of so many civilians that the Emperor and his cabinet eventually found the courage to give up. Americans are still painfully divided over the right words to describe the brutal campaign of terror that ended the war, but it is instructive that those who criticize the atomic bombings most severely have never gone on to condemn *all* the bombing. In effect, they give themselves permission to condemn one crime (Hiroshima) while enjoying the benefits of another (the conventional bombing that ended the war).

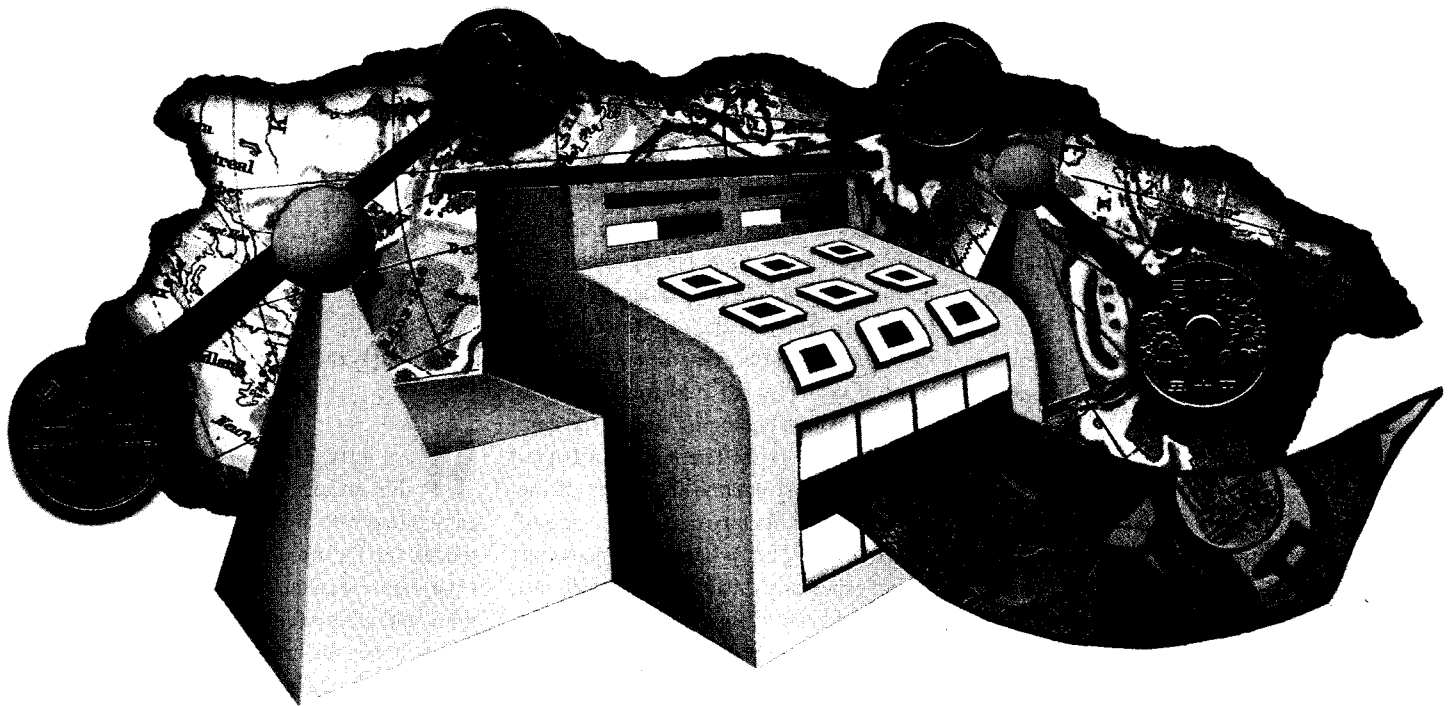
Ending the war was not the only result of the bombing. The scale of the attacks and the suffering and destruction they caused also broke the warrior spirit of Japan, bringing to a close a century of uncontrolled militarism. The undisguisable horror of the bombing must also be given credit for the following fifty years in which no atomic bombs were used, and in which there was no major war between great powers. It is this combination of horror and good results that accounts for the American ambivalence about Hiroshima. It is part of the American national gospel that the end never justifies the means, and yet it is undeniable that the end—stopping the war with Japan—was the immediate result of brutal means.

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those who criticize the
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WAS it right? When I started to write this article, I thought it would be easy enough to find a few suitable sentences for the final paragraph when the time came, but in fact it is not. What I think and what I feel are not quite in harmony. It was the horror of Hiroshima and fear of its repetition on a vastly greater scale which alarmed me when I first began to write about nuclear weapons (often in these pages), fifteen years ago. Now I find I have completed some kind of ghastly circle.

Several things explain this. One of them is my inability to see any significant distinction between the destruction of Tokyo and the destruction of Hiroshima. If either is a crime, then surely both are. I was scornful once of Truman’s refusal to admit fully what he was doing; calling Hiroshima an army base seemed a cruel joke. Now I confess sympathy for the man—responsible for the Americans who would have to invade; conscious as well of the Japanese who would die in a battle for the home islands; wielding a weapon of vast power; knowing that Japan had already been brought to the brink of surrender. It was the weapon he had. He did what he thought was right, and the war ended, the killing stopped, Japan was transformed and redeemed, fifty years followed in which this kind of killing was never repeated. It is sadness, not scorn, that I feel now when I think of Truman’s telling himself he was not “killing . . . ‘all those kids.’” The bombing was cruel, but it ended a greater, longer cruelty.

They say that the fiftieth anniversaries of great events are the last. Soon after that the people who took part in them are all dead, and the young have their own history to think about, and the old questions become academic. It will be a relief to move on. ☞



The Dollar and the Yen

*Why the wishful thinking of the experts
deserves to be devalued*

WHEN I was studying economics in England, in the early 1970s, I was puzzled by the contrast between what I saw around me and what I heard in class. At the time, the value of the pound sterling was sinking by the day. Since my money was in dollars, I wasn't worried, but I thought that the English should be upset. The wine they bought in France, and their cherished package tours to the coast of Spain, would be more expensive. They were getting poor.

But that is not what their experts told them. Newspaper editorials described each downtick in the pound's value as a tactical advantage for Britain, because its manufacturers would have a new price edge against the tricky Germans and French. Economics professors described the strategy of competitive devaluation, in which countries tried to outsmart and

by James Fallows

outmaneuver one another with cheaper currencies. I found this logic especially surprising coming from the professors, because it seemed to contradict everything else they taught. Economic thinking usually starts (and often ends) with the idea that each person's most important role is as a consumer. If people can buy more things for less money, then the economic process has been a success. A falling currency gives people fewer things to buy for more money. It might help a country's exports—in Britain's case, everything from Jaguar motorcars to Cheshire cheese—but it will hurt its consumers. Once economists started saying that *this* tradeoff made sense, the door would be open to cartels, tariffs, and other taboo steps that help producers at the consumer's expense.

Two decades later the whole idea of competitive devaluation looks silly. The

fall of the pound from the 1960s through the 1980s looks like the recent collapse of the peso: a sign of something deeply wrong.

NOW currency values have me puzzled again. I am thinking about the dollar and the yen. Twenty-odd years ago, when I was living in England, one U.S. dollar could buy 360 yen. Ten years ago, just before I moved to Japan, a dollar could buy 255 yen. This spring the dollar's value sank at least briefly to around eighty yen. In a decade the dollar has lost two thirds of its buying power in yen. To put it another way: since most international trade is still conducted in dollars, the world buying power of Japan's assets has tripled in ten years. And at each step of the way experts in the United States, like those in England long ago, have insisted that we have somehow outwitted our competitors by forcing them to accept this increase in their wealth.

The most common argument in favor of a stronger yen is that it will thwart the plans of Japanese exporters and therefore end trade problems between the United States and Japan. In 1986, en route to Japan, I read an influential and then-respected book on the subject, which said that forcing the dollar down to a rate of 190 to 200 yen (from the mid-200s) should take care of most trade imbalances between the two countries. At about that time the dollar was crashing through that level, and it kept on falling, without ever

coming close to making trade problems go away—as the Clinton Administration demonstrated this spring with its proposed tariffs on luxury-class Japanese cars. Japan's trade surplus with the world has averaged about \$100 billion a year through the past decade, including an average of nearly \$50 billion a year with the United States.

These days everyone has a theory about why things didn't work as planned. An expensive yen made it extra hard for foreigners to set up dealerships and networks in Japan, and thus hard to sell their products. Most of Japan's imports are priced in dollars, especially fuels, ores, and food, so a stronger yen actually holds down Japan's production costs. When the yen was weak, something other than sheer price disadvantage kept foreign products off the Japanese market—and when the yen was strong, those extra barriers remained. Japanese companies used the buying power of the mighty yen largely to build new plants and buy new machinery, and this investment boom kept production costs falling even faster than the yen went up.

Whatever the reason, the continuing rise of the yen was foreseen by almost none of the experts. True, it did *something* to reduce Japan's overall trade surplus. As a proportion of Japan's gross national product, the Japanese surplus fell, from more than four percent a decade ago to two to three percent in recent years. But this effect has been dwarfed by the rising world value of Japan's assets, income, and investments, as the yen has tripled in buying power.

Even this new wealth can be seen, if you look at it through the peculiar lens that the experts provide, as a sacrifice for Japan. Many Japanese investors paid a direct price for the yen's sudden rise. They poured their new wealth into American assets—Rockefeller Center, the Pebble Beach golf course—at top-of-the-market prices. When the real-estate market collapsed, along with the dollar, so did the yen value of their investments. By some calculations Japanese investors in America have since the late 1980s lost nearly as much money—about \$400 billion—as Japanese exporters have earned in America in the same years. American realtors, financiers, and consumers scored a huge one-time gain at Japan's expense. This hard experience keeps Japanese investors

from coming back to America—and their reluctance reduces demand for the dollar and forces it down further.

BEYOND the speculative losses, according to the experts, is the idea that Japan's economic "victory" may be its ultimate defeat. Very little of Japan's new wealth spreads out to ordinary families. The country may be three times as rich as it was, but its families still live in little houses—and must work harder than they did before to remain competitive as the yen rises. Early this year the distinguished economic columnist Robert Samuelson explained in *Newsweek* that Japan had become its own worst enemy. By refusing to import, he suggested, Japan forces up the value of the yen—which will ultimately choke the exporters that are its heart and pride. Samuelson dramatized the point:

Even the Japanese must now realize that their huge trade surpluses are self-defeating. Japan has long nourished the illusion that capturing foreign markets provided protection against an unstable world economy. But this strategy is finally backfiring, as a rapidly rising exchange rate undermines its export-based economy.

But I have played a trick. I am quoting not from Samuelson's 1995 column but from a nearly identical one he published nine years earlier, in May of 1986. The dollar's value had just plummeted—to around 170 yen. Many people in Japan worried that the country's exporters would be overwhelmed. Samuelson was only one of many American experts to say, We warned you, but you didn't listen, and now you Japanese are about to be punished for making your currency so valuable!

The experts are issuing the same warning now. Who knows? With the dollar around eighty yen, they could finally be right. There must be *some* exchange rate at which Toshiba and Mitsubishi cannot export. We just have no idea what that rate is.

In fact, we know only one thing for sure about exchange rates. We know that historically it is never a "victory," or a sign of health, or even a shrewd tactical maneuver, when a country rides its currency down for years. We know that about England and its battered pound sterling. We know it about Mexico, with its poor peso. We should know it about the dollar and ourselves. ☾

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- ☞ what "ham" has to do with overacting and amateur radio operators?
- ☞ just what are "salad days" anyway?



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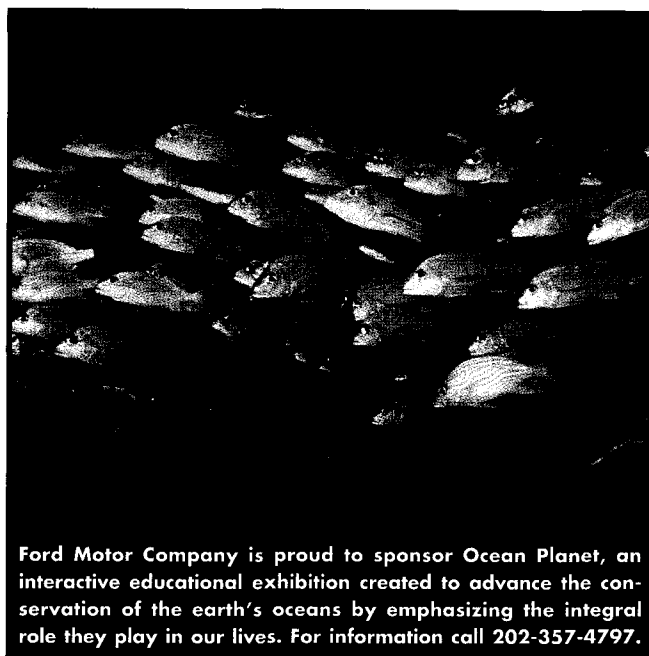
A SPECIAL REPORT ON THE OCEAN PLANET EXHIBITION



Introduction

Toward understanding and conserving the world's oceans

On April 22, the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History opened the Ocean Planet exhibition. In the words of the curator, Judith Gradwohl, "This exhibition is both a celebration and a warning that, in ways people may never have considered, we are all seafarers and all have a hand—and a stake—in what happens to the seas." Gradwohl began developing the exhibition in 1991, when she realized that ocean conservation was going to become "the rain forest of the nineties." Although much damage has already been done to the oceans, it is not too late to work toward recovery. The exhibition, which will remain in Washington, D.C., until 1996 and then travel to 11 cities before the year 2000, is the main focus of a major national educational effort. Tie-ins with the exhibition include books, CD-ROMs, interactive kiosks, television programs, and a World Wide Web site on the Internet.



Ford Motor Company is proud to sponsor Ocean Planet, an interactive educational exhibition created to advance the conservation of the earth's oceans by emphasizing the integral role they play in our lives. For information call 202-357-4797.

Welcome to Ocean Planet

Multi-media immersion and ocean science

Visitors enter the exhibition through a simulated immersion tunnel that brings forth the sounds of the sea in surround-sound stereo, and then witness a computer-generated 3-D flyby provided by NASA and shown on a large-screen TV. Starting high in outer space, viewers take a nose dive into the ocean somewhere near Hawaii and travel to the deepest spot on earth, inside the Mariana Trench. The section "Recently Revealed" shows how scientists learn constantly from the sea. The methods and results of their studies are sometimes unusual: one exhibit shows how a lost cargo of Nike shoes helped oceanographers plot ocean currents.

Sea People

Profiles of lives that depend on the sea

The "Sea People" exhibit explores three characteristics of regions where people make their living from the ocean: a strong sense of community, the gaining and passing on of knowledge (from navigational techniques to fishing methods), and the ever-present danger of unpredictable waters. Unlike most exhibitions, however, Ocean Planet is not based simply on a collection of objects: the curator has striven to give the visitor a rich mixed-media experience. In this section visitors see a video collage of sea people—fishermen, merchant marines, surfers, oil-rig workers, tourists—from all over the world, and listen to them describe in their own words how it is to live by and on the sea.

Sea Store

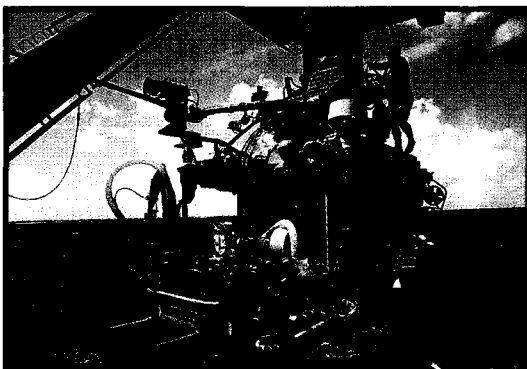
The vast variety of products from the sea

The "Sea Store," sure to be among the favorite sections of young visitors, highlights how much people have come to depend on the ocean for an amazing range of products—and thus the importance of maintaining a healthy ocean. Products from house paint to toothpaste are arranged in generic packaging on grocery store-style shelves. When a bar-code reader is waved over a product, those of its ingredients that come from the sea are displayed on a monitor. Algae, for example, seem to be in everything from tomato sauce to pharmaceuticals. At the "Sea-Foods" counter visitors learn that in the United States the average person eats about 15 pounds of seafood a year. This section shows what the fish look like alive and what they do for a living before they make it to your plate. The "Pharmasea" highlights the range of remedies that have come from the ocean—from traditional cures for stomach pain to the coral now being used as a bone substitute. "Sightsealing" explains what is not safe to take from the ocean and beach and what is proper recreational use of the ocean. Perhaps the most interesting revelation in this section suggests the long history of man's interaction with the ocean: more than half of the world's population lives within 60 miles of a coastline.

Oceans in Peril

Threats to the delicate balance of nature

"Oceans in Peril" shows the real crisis that has developed as a result of man's exploitation of the ocean. A series of interactive stations, shaped like giant buoys, present the viewer with unsettling facts about the environmental damage human beings have caused. At the "Pollution" buoy the visitor sees representations of toxic materials and poisons that have contaminated the waters. A turn of a tube shows where that poison came from: bleached paper and some herbicides, for instance, contain deadly dioxins. A particularly disturbing display shows the effects of the careless disposal of trash: a party balloon, its ribbon still attached, that blocked a sperm whale's digestive tract. Some displays challenge commonly held opinions: it turns out that more gallons of oil enter the ocean by going down the drain than from all large oil spills combined. Other displays focus on the effects of overfishing, coastal development and destruction, and biological invasions—the unwelcome introduction of non-indigenous species into new habitats.



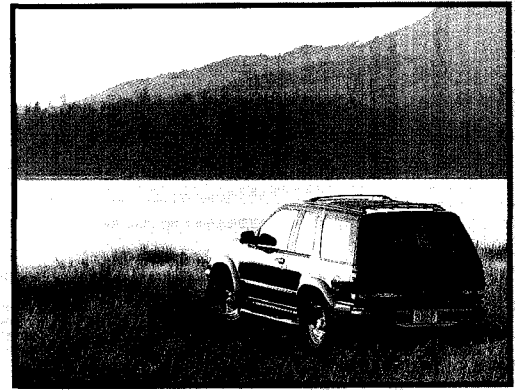
Above: Aboard the Johnson Sea Link submersible, featured in the exhibition, scientists observe marine life by peering through the craft's thick acrylic windshield or through its video cameras.

Right: A child learns about overfishing at an interactive "buoy" in the "Oceans in Peril" section.

Ocean Planet Online

The exhibition on the World Wide Web

If you can't make it to Washington and Ocean Planet won't be traveling to a city near you, the entire exhibition—and more—can still be experienced through Ocean Planet Online on the World Wide Web (http://seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov/ocean_planet.html). The Smithsonian's first such adaptation on the Web, it was developed in conjunction with the exhibition, not merely as an afterthought. Most photos, all the text, the NASA 3-D fly-by, and even the sounds of whales from the immersion tunnel are included. With its sophisticated graphic layout and huge breadth of content, this is one of the most advanced sites on the Internet. Visitors may take a guided tour or just click on a floor plan to enter a section. Links are provided to scientific resources; relevant news is continually updated; and a powerful search tool allows visitors to find specific text, photographs, or objects. There is also a footnoted reference to every fact in the exhibition. Gene Feldman, the Web site's developer, says it allows one to experience the feeling, spirit, and beauty of the show.

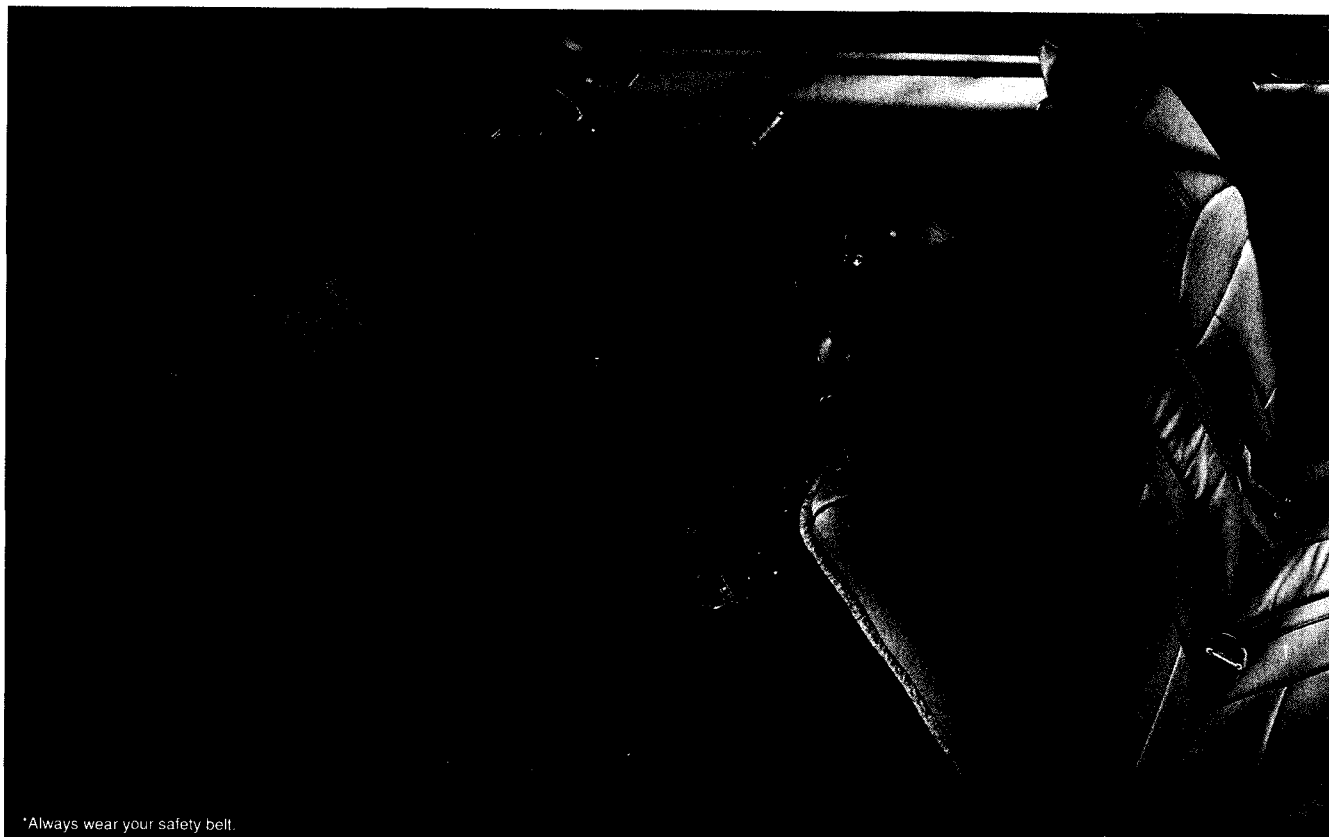


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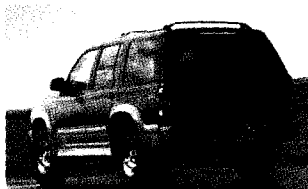


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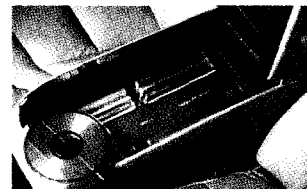


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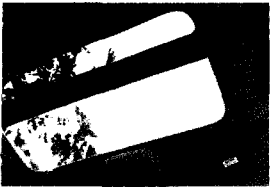
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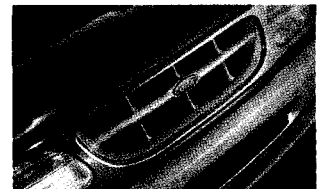


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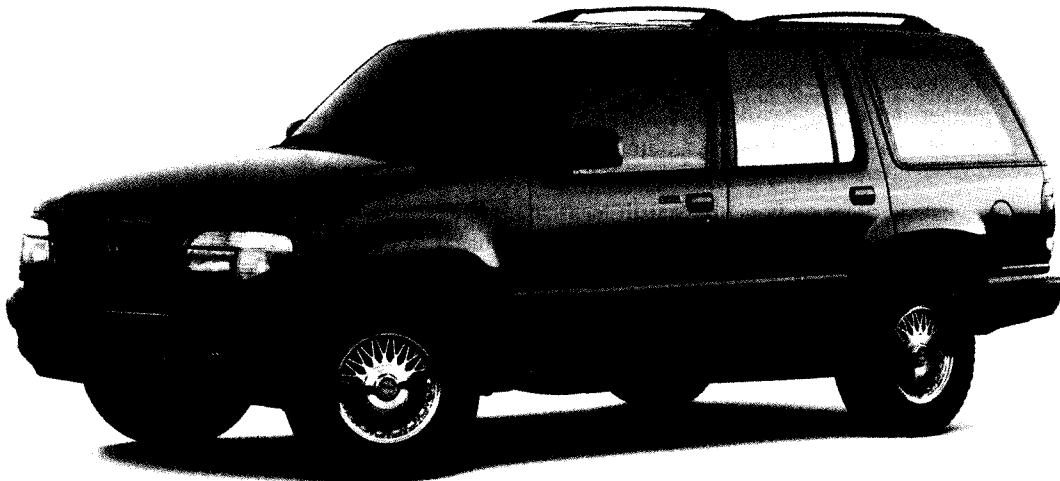


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The Cat in the Hat

A tale of a headpiece

SOMEWHERE over the Atlantic Ocean my fourteen-year-old son, Andrew, looked at me from under the brim of his Georgetown Hoyas cap, tightened his lips, and announced, "You're not wearing that beret in Brussels." I matched Andrew's directness with sarcasm: "Perhaps you haven't noticed that I'm bald." Then I added, "Brussels is cold in March, and besides, I look good in a beret."

"Actually, Dad, you look stupid in a beret, and no one in Brussels wears them."

"Want to bet?" I replied. We shook hands on our wager—100 Belgian francs on whether we would see another man wearing a beret during our first day in Brussels. The bet was a tactic for establishing a truce in our running battle over my hats—a battle that had intensified as we packed and drove to the airport, with my wife, Casey, for a combined business and pleasure trip that would take us on to Amsterdam.

Andrew and I fight over hats because we have wholly different attitudes toward them. He says that sports caps, because they are so common among members of his generation, help him blend in—even in Brussels, even in fine restaurants. I think—though Andrew denies this—that these hats also uplift him through some hint of affiliation with the players, whom

he admires. In contrast, Andrew sees my hat-wearing habits as threats to his self-esteem. This is partly because he is a teenager. (Andrew's junior high school principal told us how to embarrass our children: "Be in public, be with your child, and be yourself.") But Andrew's fear also results from my tendency to wear hats that make me stand out in a crowd.

TO understand this, you need to know a bit of my history. My infatuation with hats started when my hair began to fall out, and it has grown along with the size of my bald spot. At first the hats hid the impending baldness and protected my vanity. Later they also protected my head against the elements.

In my late twenties, ashamed of my baldness, I grew my hair long on the left side and combed about six inches of it across the top—giving myself a look that was later popularized by Billy Tubbs when he coached the University of Oklahoma basketball team and Arthur Liman when he served as chief counsel to the Senate Iran-Contra committee. Using this technique, I was able to fool several short, nearsighted people at dimly lit cocktail parties. But I paid a high price in other circumstances: I had to maintain an almost constant state of vigilance. At any moment a gust of wind could make the combed-

over hair reach for the sky, or stand at a right angle to the side of my head, like a carport attached to a geodesic dome. And even *inside* buildings wind could blow, because of changes in air pressure when someone opened a door. These interior wind shears were brief, however, and I could quickly batten down the cover. Outside, it was a different story. Unwilling to use pomade, spray, or hairpins, I chose hats to combat this risk of humiliation.

A few years later—married, secure in a job, and exhausted from trying to keep my head tilted into the wind—I was ready to accept my baldness, so I chopped off the hair cover. But I still needed hats. And not just in winter. I found out that the sun is dangerous, and I had to protect my skin. So my primary motive in wearing hats changed, from hiding a weakness to preserving my health. And gradually I realized that I could use hats to enhance my image. I've worn deerstalkers, Greek fisherman's caps, Irish hunter's hats, Panama hats, Indonesian straw hats, and wool and cotton caps of every description. Each one, I thought, imbued me with a different persona. I wasn't just some bald guy; I was a rugged Greek fisherman, a Panamanian plantation owner, a Balinese rice farmer. When I wore my deerstalker and smoked a calabash pipe, I was Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes. In the beret I was Yves Montand, exuding ennui and sangfroid in *La Guerre Est Finie*.

Over the past twenty-five years I have bought and worn more than a hundred hats. But you could not call me a collector; you see, I have lost almost all of them. In fact, I have never held on to a hat for more than three years. Many vanished within days—falling out of overstuffed coat pockets, I suppose, or stolen by other insecure men.

THE problem with using hats to create an image is that the more dashing a hat makes me feel, the more it embarrasses Andrew. I have humiliated him by wearing an Australian cowboy hat in Egypt and Paris, a deerstalker in Washington, D.C., and a red hunter's cap with fur earmuffs in downtown Columbia, Missouri.

So I understood why he dreaded walking around with me in Brussels. Still, except for a few hours in the Musée d'Art

Ancien, we spent virtually the entire day on the streets of that beautiful city. And despite Andrew's imprecations, I wore the black beret, removing it only when he pleaded with me to save him from shame as we walked past a group of teenage boys riding skateboards on the Place de l'Albertine. Most of the day we trudged around the Grand-Place, our eyes skipping across the magnificent façades of the guild houses to scrutinize the head of every male we could find.

By midnight, when we decided to return to our hotel, we had failed to find a man in a beret. Andrew, with smug graciousness, offered to take his winnings in Dutch guilders, since we planned to leave by train for Amsterdam the following afternoon. (The next morning, too late for the bet, we saw a Belgian man in a beret speed by on a bicycle.)

We arrived in Amsterdam on a cold, wintry afternoon, and I told Andrew I thought we'd see berets there. He seemed open to that possibility, and recognizing my need to keep warm, he said he didn't mind so much if I wore the beret in Amsterdam—though he still found it embarrassing. Our eyes continued to search for berets in Amsterdam, but despite the cold we saw very few hats of any kind. Fragile old women, bald men, young children—all seemed to defy this most elemental need for cover.

We checked into the Agora Hotel, a small place on the Singel Canal renowned for friendliness. As we unloaded our bags from the taxi to the sidewalk, the hotel proprietress, Els Bruijnse, greeted us warmly with "This must be the family Riskin," showed us into the lobby, and pointed out her husband, Yvo Muthert, who was talking with a middle-aged couple wearing *giant* black berets. I asked where they got them. The couple—North Americans, judging from their accents—explained that the wife had made the berets and that they were named for Rembrandt, who had worn the same style. Andrew gave me a threatening, "Don't you dare even think about it" look.

After dinner we crossed a nearby bridge and strolled peacefully along the Singel Canal. Before we had covered twenty yards of cobblestones, a huge gust of wind lifted the beret off my shining head and dropped it into the canal. We stood and stared helplessly as the much-contested beret floated down the canal.

"I suppose you're happy now," I told Andrew. He replied, to my surprise, that he felt guilty.

Desperate, I ran back to the Agora, announced, "The wind has blown my beret into the canal," and asked if they had a long stick I might use to retrieve it. They rushed into action, producing first a broom, which I pronounced too short, and then two long plastic poles with rectangular protuberances on one end, which were used to open and close the shades on the hotel sunroof. I ran back to Casey and Andrew, who were tracking the beret's movements. Moments later Yvo tore after me with a roll of twine and scissors. He retrieved the poles, tied them together, and climbed over the railing—wearing only light slacks, a silk shirt, and heel-less slippers (no hat, though, and I noticed for the first time that he was nearly as bald as I). Then he crawled halfway down the canal wall and—with one foot on a protruding stone and one hand on the railing—fished out my beret.

Overjoyed and amazed, we thanked him profusely. Casey rinsed the beret and blocked it on a towel in our room for what we knew would be at least four days of drying.

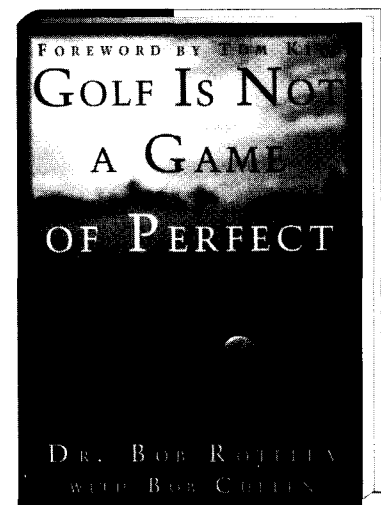
Andrew offered a solution to my immediate problem—keeping my head warm: "You can wear my Georgetown hat . . . I guess." The next day, after I failed to find a suitable hat in the department stores nearby, I accepted—but reluctantly. I felt silly and false wearing a Georgetown Hoyas cap on a canal tour boat, and conspicuously inappropriate, especially when we approached the Anne Frank house.

After a couple of days in the Georgetown Hoyas cap I stumbled across a store called the English Hatter, and bought five ordinary berets (a two-year supply)—passing up the Rembrandts. I felt secure, presentable, and appropriate for the business portion of the trip. In fact, I felt a bit like Yves Montand again.

On our final day in Amsterdam, I said goodbye to our hosts and thanked them once more for their extraordinary help. They giggled. I asked why. Yvo's explanation made clear that he knew I was not Yves Montand, that he saw me primarily as a fellow bald man. He told me that the night I lost my beret, when I rushed bareheaded into the hotel to ask for help, he had misheard me; he thought I said my *toupee* had blown into the canal. ☘

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—Nick Price

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Between the Sea and the Jungle

A remote hotel in Costa Rica puts the rain forest first

I. THE GUIDE

AUGUSTO Rodríguez is a supple, talkative, graying man who walks with unaffected grace; he wears rubber boots and a small hat and carries a long stick as he leads us under the canopy of the rain forest, on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. We four gringos, guests at the Lapa Rios resort, follow him along a narrow trail that winds

by Peter Davison

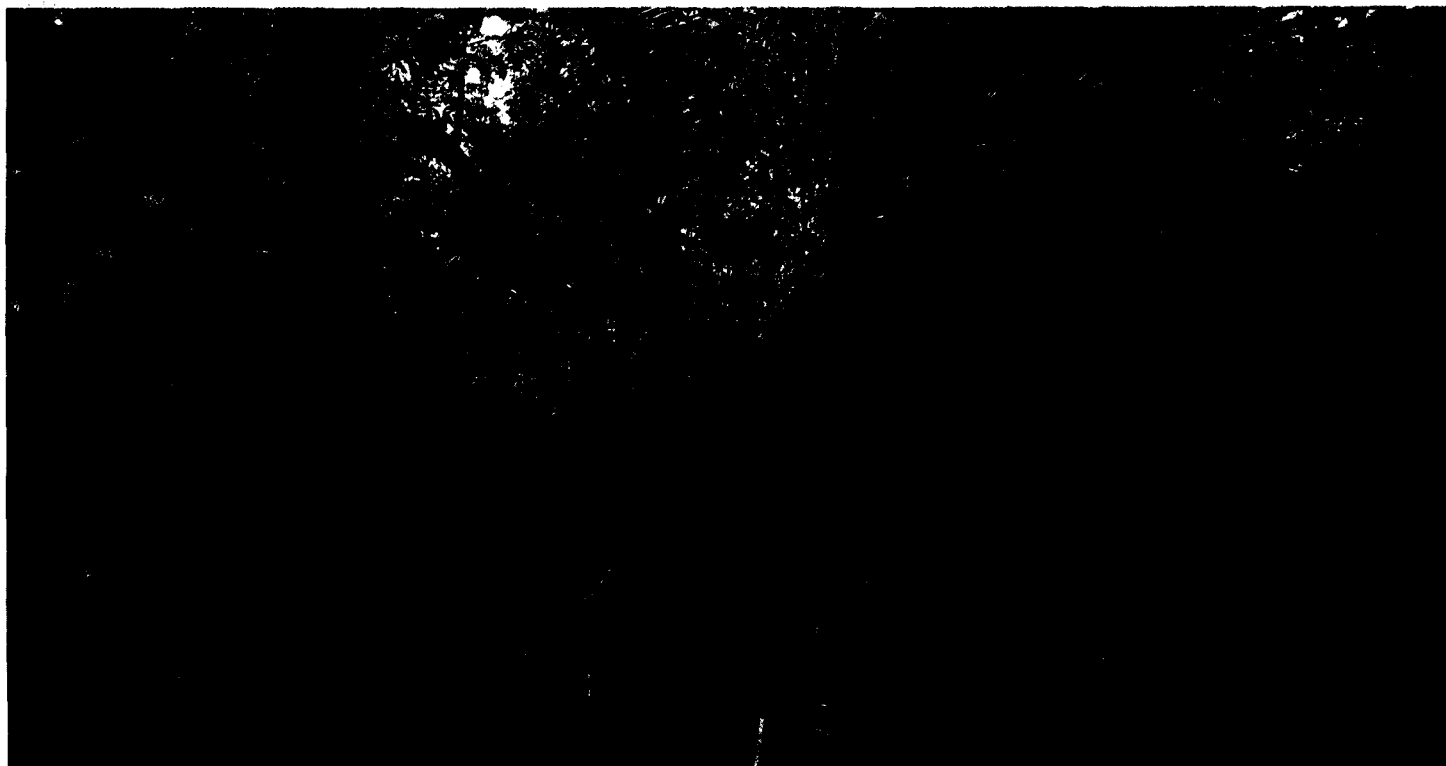
through the gloom down a hill toward a stream hustling noisily in our near future. Augusto comes to a stop and seems to sniff the air. "There is an animal nearby," he announces in his strongly accented English. He inches across the slope, wary and alert, and points to something we cannot see. "*Curasao*," I think he says, and then he begins shuffling forward, stooped and chanting as he creeps toward the "animal," which we are soon

able to make out as a dingy bird, roughly the size and shape of a guinea fowl, standing motionless on the ground beneath a massive strangler fig tree.

Augusto chants as though he were a priest, in a singsong that might be part of a black mass in an abandoned chapel. The "*curasao*," which *Birds of Costa Rica* will later identify as a "*gallina de monte*" (*Tinamus major*), has been entirely disarmed. We approach, and it doesn't stir. Augusto has hypnotized it. Immobile, it stares at its watchers without affect, a remote and ineffectual bird. How long will it stay like this? Half an hour, Augusto says firmly, and he leads us onward.

We descend to a waterfall we have been hearing in the background, and climb past it up another slope. "White-winged dove," Augusto says solemnly, handing us a feather he has picked up from the ground; he moves on, and then stops and points to a "quinine tree." A little later he points out another tree, which "produces milk you use to keep from getting acid in the stomach." Next he hands us some berries, asking us to smell them. "Cit-

Below: the coastal rain forest of the Osa Peninsula. Above: a Costa Rican squirrel monkey



Tradition

a four-part series

The source of Absolut Vodka is in southern Sweden, in the rich wheat fields of the Småland region, where people have been making vodka for centuries. At distilleries near the small town of Åhus, the elements of the Swedish environment and the Swedish past combine to form a pure product of the Swedish culture: Absolut Vodka.

In the early 15th century Swedes began to distill spirits called brännvin. Used originally as medicine or to make gunpowder, brännvin was destined for purposes beyond science and war. By the 17th century a descendant of these primitive spirits—what we know today as vodka—had become the national drink of Sweden.

In 1879 the father of Absolut Vodka, Lars Olsson Smith, introduced a revolutionary method of distillation that yielded a spirit of unprecedented purity—what he called “Absolutely Pure Vodka.” Not only the method but also the name survives at the distilleries where Absolut Vodka is made.

Today, using wheat harvested from the nearby fields and water from their own well, the distilleries at Åhus, a town of barely 10,000 people, produce every ounce of Absolut Vodka consumed throughout the world. The original Absolut distillery there, built in 1906 and still operating, embodies not only the centuries-old local tradition of making vodka, but also the best of modern technology and the richness and purity of the country of Sweden.



ronella lemon. It opens the breathing tubes, opens the valves of the heart."

Augusto has already told us that his father was English and his mother was Indian, and that he is a shaman. We fork off the narrow trail, and he stops, as he has done at each junction, to place his hands together and, with bowed head, murmur a prayer for safety on the next leg. Furry gray fragments fall from the balsa trees above. Another tree has spines growing up its trunk. Augusto points out a procession of leaf-cutting ants crossing our path, and a black spider in a huge web. A sudden crash, and a crested eagle flaps hugely away under the trees, to disappear at length into the forest canopy.

Augusto bids us look for motion in the leaves overhead and listen for a high whistle as a troop of spider monkeys approaches. We pause by a camphor tree, and the monkeys catch up with us, swinging from branch to branch far above our heads. A languid, cinnamon-colored monkey, feet clenched in one tree and hands in the next, stretches overhead in sunshine, like a suspension bridge, across which two other monkeys now casually stroll. "They're waiting for the baby," Augusto says. The baby appears and leaps aboard the hanging monkey as though climbing into a taxi, which whisks it away.

Later, as we are wading down a stream bed, Augusto gestures in the air with his stick. "Be careful," he says. "Walk on the

coiled in loopy layers upon itself, lies an immobile serpent, "mute as a mouse in a / corner," its wedge-shaped head and criss-cross markings proclaiming it a pit viper, the dreaded fer-de-lance. "Just stay still," Augusto says. "It might jump on you if you fall down." None of us falls down. We are grateful for our guide, and grateful that we did not try to walk alone.

II. THE OWNERS

IT is before breakfast. I am talking with John Lewis under the canopy at the entrance to Lapa Rios. Lewis, a spare, trim, bristly man with a capacity for crisp utterance, says, "We came here and fell in love with the people, the country, the geography, the climate. A country without violence, no standing army, democracy. I was sitting on the balcony of the hotel at Quepos after about five beers, and I suddenly thought, How about if we do a resort for birders in Costa Rica?" John and Karen Lewis were in the Peace Corps in Africa in the 1960s. John for twenty years conducted a very successful law practice in Minneapolis, and Karen taught music, but neither of them ever forgot those far-off years. "Though we didn't know it at the time, they were the best two years of our lives," John says. When they took their young children back to Kenya in 1988, the whole memory of their dedicated youth came back. Then John's father died. The result was a re-appraisal.

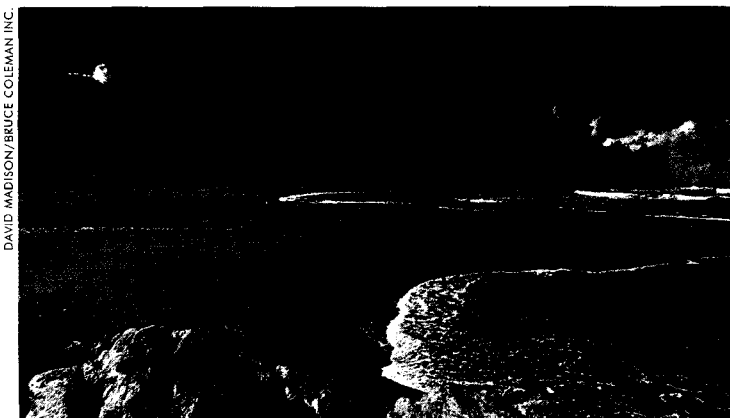
They decided to quit their jobs and settle in a tropical climate, near the sea, and engage in something involved with tourism. They polled travel agents and were told that they would do best to establish an inn in the wil-

camp. At the far end of the road John found himself overlooking the Pacific Ocean from a hilltop clearing where there was land for sale: a thousand acres, with five rivers, forty waterfalls, and a view to eternity—a perfect place for a small hotel. "This is the place," he radioed Karen, "but it's four times our budget." "Buy it," she replied. "We'll figure out how to pay for it." They cashed in everything: their house, his law practice, their retirement fund, and their savings. A Minneapolis architect helped the Lewises design a simple and beautiful system of thatched buildings, each with a magnificent exposure to views, air, ocean, and forest. By early 1993 Lapa Rios ("Rivers of the Scarlet Macaw") had been designed and built and was in operation, with Karen as building superintendent, interior designer, and ambiance controller, and John as financial manager, personnel manager, marketing director, and supervisor of supply, transportation, and legal services.

Lapa Rios is no ordinary hotel. It can serve about thirty guests at a time and has a staff of thirty-three. In less than three years it has made a reputation for itself among aficionados of ecotourism. But John and Karen Lewis have goals other than merely running a successful luxury hotel: to raise capital for the acquisition and preservation of endangered land; to disseminate information about deforestation, reforestation, and rain-forest preservation; and to work with the local community to help demonstrate that a rain forest left standing is worth more than the wood or the next best use if the forest were cut down.

III. THE PLACE

WE arrive in Puerto Jiménez, approaching in a thirty-passenger plane across the waters of Golfo Dulce to touch down at a dirt airstrip next to a cemetery, a faintly sinister spot reminiscent of the opening pages of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. John Lewis is there to deliver a few departing guests to the same loop flight that has brought us from San José, the capital, in a little over an hour. Once they have boarded the plane, he escorts us and our bags to an open truck. We bounce happily on wooden seats in the back for about forty-five minutes along a dirt road that leads between pastures where Brahma cattle lie



The coastline of the Osa Peninsula and the Pacific Ocean

left side; keep away from the right." We wade on about fifty feet. "Stop," he says. "Look," and he points with his stick to the shallows by the edge of the stream. The eternal half-light of the rain forest's understory keeps the colors muted; the air is thick with moisture and with the scent of decaying leaves. Where he is pointing,

derness that could offer high-quality accommodations and service. Where? In 1990 they narrowed the search to Costa Rica's Pacific coast, and made six trips there. John wandered down to the Osa Peninsula, which boasted only one road and whose principal town, Puerto Jiménez, had once been a Panamanian prison

in the shade of large trees, and across several shallow fords whose waters gurgle around our wheels. Cattle egrets stand everywhere, on the backs of the cattle, on the ground at their sides. The roadside is splashed with bright heliconia blossoms of red and yellow, with the scarlet blooms of wild ginger and banana trees.

The truck stops to shift into four-wheel drive, and a large bird with a long, dark, thick neck that in this late-morning light looks yellow in the front flaps a few strokes and lands by a stream, examining us out of one orange eye; it is a bare-throated tiger-heron (*Tigrisoma mexicanum*). The air is quite hot and getting hotter, and we are glad when the truck starts up again and the breeze can cool our sweat. The woods are growing deeper, but most of the land on both sides is fenced off by posts formed by slender living trees. Now and then we see a thatched or tin-roofed building—a house? a school? A fenced-in plantation of trees carries a sign that says STON FORESTAL. (This refers to the Stone Container Corporation, one of the world's largest manufacturers of corrugated paper products. Those trees are being grown on land rented from local farmers. It will take just under twenty years to grow three crops of pulpwood here. After Stone's lease expires, the owners may use the spent land as they will.)

After a particularly splashy ford, we zag to the left up a steep slope, and then zig to the right, still more steeply, while a vast expanse of Pacific Ocean opens up below us. We pass through an entrance gate and whine still more steeply to a level parking place beyond which rises, perhaps fifty feet into the air, a peaked thatched roof. Smiling, Karen Lewis comes forward to welcome us to Lapa Rios. A young man, in halting English, begins to offer us a drink, but he is interrupted by a thunderous huffing-groaning sound: uh uh uh UH UH UH. "Can you hear the howler monkeys?" Karen asks, enthusiastically but unnecessarily, for they seem to be at our shoulder. The young man now brings my wife and me tall, cool glasses of fruit punch, each adorned with a butter-yellow blossom. Under the high straw roof containing a lookout above our heads we walk forward, sipping, to a breathtaking verandah lookout, which faces south on the open Pacific, southeast on Golfo Dulce. To the southwest and west a 270-degree view of the coastal rain forest spreads out

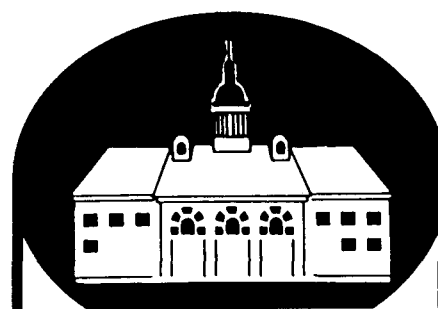
and up. There is not a boat to be seen on the water, but overhead wheel white hawks and black vultures. The hot sky is brilliantly blue. Soon we are escorted to our bungalow, down 146 steps. On a dazzling white wall a gecko lizard is perched upside down next to the doorknob that opens a locked door into a high thatched room, deeply shaded now at midmorning, with its own terrace, indoor-and-outdoor shower, closets and tables, chairs and overhead fan, two huge firm beds, mosquito netting, and screen walls with bamboo blinds to keep out the heat of the day. We look at each other and sigh. Eternal honeymooners.

When we climb back up the steps past the swimming pool for lunch (gaspacho, a tomato stuffed with tuna, tropical fruit), we are further persuaded that we have gone to heaven. Dinner by candlelight (fish ceviche, fresh grilled tuna, fresh vegetables, flan, white Chilean wine), with Glenn Gould's Bach Partitas in the background, confirms that belief. The moon rises full over the Pacific. As we descend to our bungalow, the huge red eyes of common *pauraques*, or night-hawks, stare at our approach and then flit away. We fall asleep under our mosquito nets (though there are no mosquitos) to the mewing of tiny birds, the rustle of palm leaves, the occasional cry of nocturnal animals hunting one another in the rain forest.

IV. THE DREAM

KAREN Lewis says, "Someone told us about a movie that came out when we were down here, called *Field of Dreams*: 'If you build it, they will come.' So we came and we did what we said we would do, and surprised the community in the Osa, because they kept waiting for a two-hundred-room hotel to be built here. We came here to be a model of how to do something. Tourism has grown too quickly in Costa Rica for the quality of service to grow. 'Good' is not enough."

Lapa Rios has been built, and they have come: the traffic in the dry season (December to April) is all that the Lewises can handle, but they have no intention of expanding. "That's no solution," Karen says. John and Karen were both hoping for a higher achievement. Karen says, "There is something almost spiritual here—looking at the ocean; feeling the



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breeze out of the rain forest; listening to the howler monkeys, the insects that are always humming, the cicadas and crickets and whatnot; watching the moon come up and just spill its light." John says, "This isn't only a piece of land; it's an organism. . . . When we bought it, we thought it was beautiful, but now people have come from everywhere, and we know it's a very special forest."

Eighty-five percent of the guests at Lapa Rios are from the United States. The rest are for the most part German, Swiss, and Canadian. The tourists who come must, of course, be fairly affluent, though the rates are not unreasonable: \$120 per day per person, all meals and local transport included, with drinks and tours extra. (For more information about Lapa Rios, send a fax to 011-506-735-5179; there is no direct phone service to the hotel.) Guests ought to be hale and hearty to enjoy the occasional rigors of outdoor rain-forest life. Children under five are not encouraged to come, because metropolitan safety standards cannot apply to an inn built on a hilltop with precipitous slopes falling away to a rain forest inhabited by boa constrictors and tarantulas.

The Lewises wish—and not only for economic reasons—that more tourists would come in what Karen calls the "green season": May to November. John says, "It's cooler. It's greener. It's the mud season. It's quieter. The people who live here like it better than the dry season. It rains in the afternoons and the evenings primarily. Our guests are as happy here in the rainy season as in the dry. We do the tours: it's more exciting. A couple of times we've had to hire a farm tractor to get them to their flights. You can't believe the intensity of rain."

The Lewises have other wishes as well. Karen says, "Our prime focus coming here was to preserve the forest—our first reason. Now we're being pushed by our staff: 'Why don't you build me a house for my family? Let me bring my wife, and I'll stay.' There is all this pressure on us to build a company town, but we came here to preserve the forest."

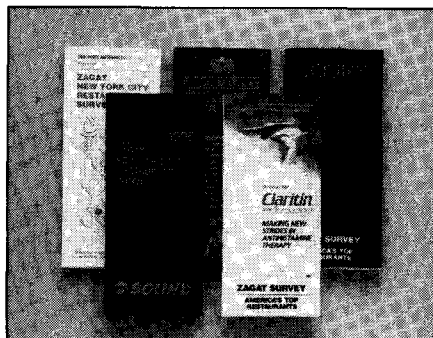
They had hoped to create a model for ecotourism. And what *is* ecotourism? That's not quite clear as yet—not in practice. Does the emphasis fall on ecology or on economics? The Lewises have certainly felt the conflict. "Four years ago,"

John says, "there was very little traffic on the road—a vehicle once every two days. Now everyone wants to be in the wilderness but wants to be near someplace that is established, near the 'private nature reserve.' Since the building of Lapa Rios, land values on the Osa Peninsula have gone up between five hundred and a thousand percent." John, with deep regret, expects to see a lot of building by people who say they are conservationists but who will in practice be chipping away at the rain forest.

As John makes this doleful prediction, sitting in the shaded entrance to Lapa Rios at 7:00 A.M., he suddenly freezes. "A white hawk just came and landed in the trees not more than forty feet away!" My tape records a *skrawk* of birdcall, a skitter of feet, hushed exclamations in the background. The hawk (*Leucopternis albigollis*) crouches on a low branch, at eye level, blinking, weaving, and glaring at us, Marine to Marine. Who owns this forest anyhow?

The hawk flies away. John goes on: "My idea was that we could be an outpost in the wilderness for years and years, and that things around us would stay pretty much the same. People would enjoy our wilderness and our food and our accommodations and go back. Being a model demonstration unit means that we have motivated a lot of people to come and move next to us and eliminate the buffer of wilderness right next to our preserve. On the other hand, there are people who have bought fifteen hundred acres right next to us, and they *are* going to preserve those pieces. They are doing that on the assurance that *we* will be here. In terms of acreage we have probably accounted for a large increase in the preservation of forest that had been slated for potential destruction.

"We thought we were going to motivate conservationists; but the real outcome is that we *have* motivated visitors to take a serious look at their lives. Yes, the forest needs to be dedicated. It's a private nature reserve because we say it is." That bold statement raises nagging questions that make a tourist uneasy as he watches for toucans and howler monkeys in the green forest canopy outside Lapa Rios. The sea and the jungle belong to no one, not to the awed visitor, not to the innkeeper, not to the dedicated shaman, not even to the "Rich Coast" of Central America. ☼



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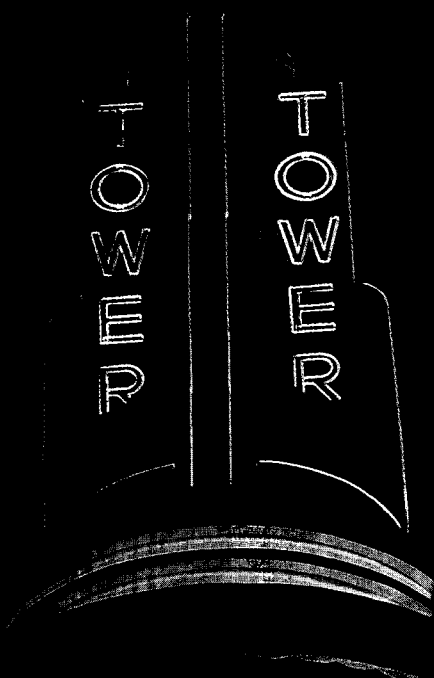
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HOW I GOT HERE - THE LINER NOTES:



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Bought first record,
age 9.

Sold first record,
age 9½.

Dug album cover art.
Still do.

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First Interstate Bank.

RUSS SOLOMON, OWNER,
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YOU & 

First Interstate Bank

THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC ORDER

by ADAM WALINSKY

The Department of Justice now says that “stranger murders” have become four times as common as family killings, and that the chances of getting away with one exceed 80 percent. Scholars say the nation’s murder rate may soon double. The author says we are inviting this “long descending night” of crime by teaching violent young people that “we will do almost anything not to have to act to defend ourselves, our country, or our character as people of decency and strength”

NUMBERS are useful in politics, because they are more neutral than adjectival speech and because they express magnitude—that is, they can tell us not only that we confront a danger but also what the depth and direction of the danger are. The most important numbers in America deal with violence—not the occasional terrorist violence but the terror of everyday life as it is lived by millions of citizens today, and as it threatens to become for many more of us for the rest of this century and beyond.

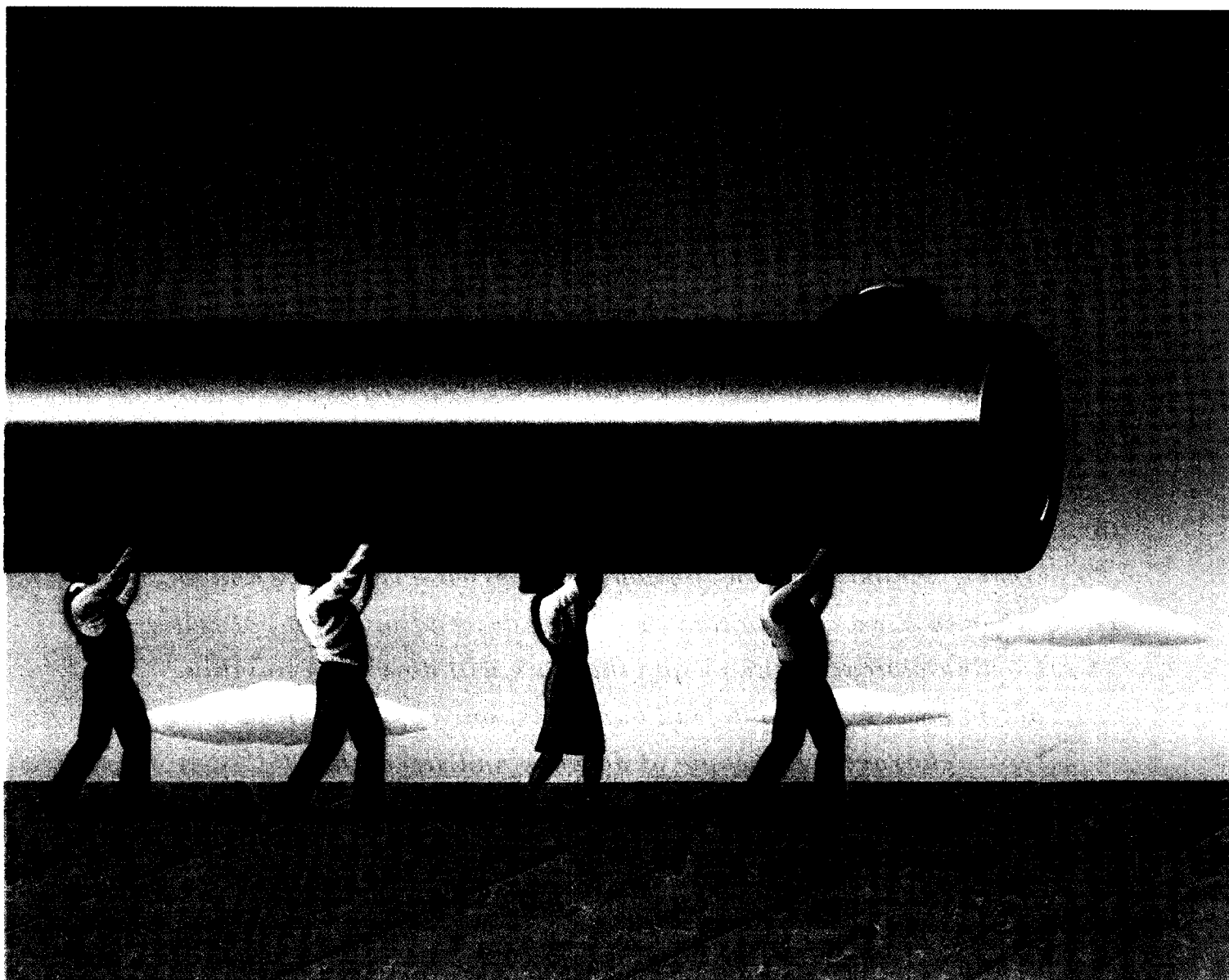
During his campaign and since, President Bill Clinton has spoken of a sharp decline in the strength of the nation’s police forces. In the 1960s the United States as a whole had 3.3 police officers for every violent crime reported per year. In



1993 it had 3.47 violent crimes reported for every police officer. In relation to the amount of violent crime, then, we have less than one tenth the effective police power of thirty years ago; or, in another formulation, each police officer today must deal with 11.45 times as many violent crimes as his predecessor of years gone by.

Title I of the 1994 crime bill intends to add 100,000 police officers nationally by the year 2000. (Most experts believe that far fewer new officers—perhaps 25,000—will actually be hired. For the purposes of this argument,

though, let us assume the larger figure.) There are now some 554,000 officers serving on all state and local police forces; 100,000 more would be an increase of 18.4 percent. Rather than having 3.47 times as many violent crimes as police officers, we would have 2.94 times as many; or, each police offi-

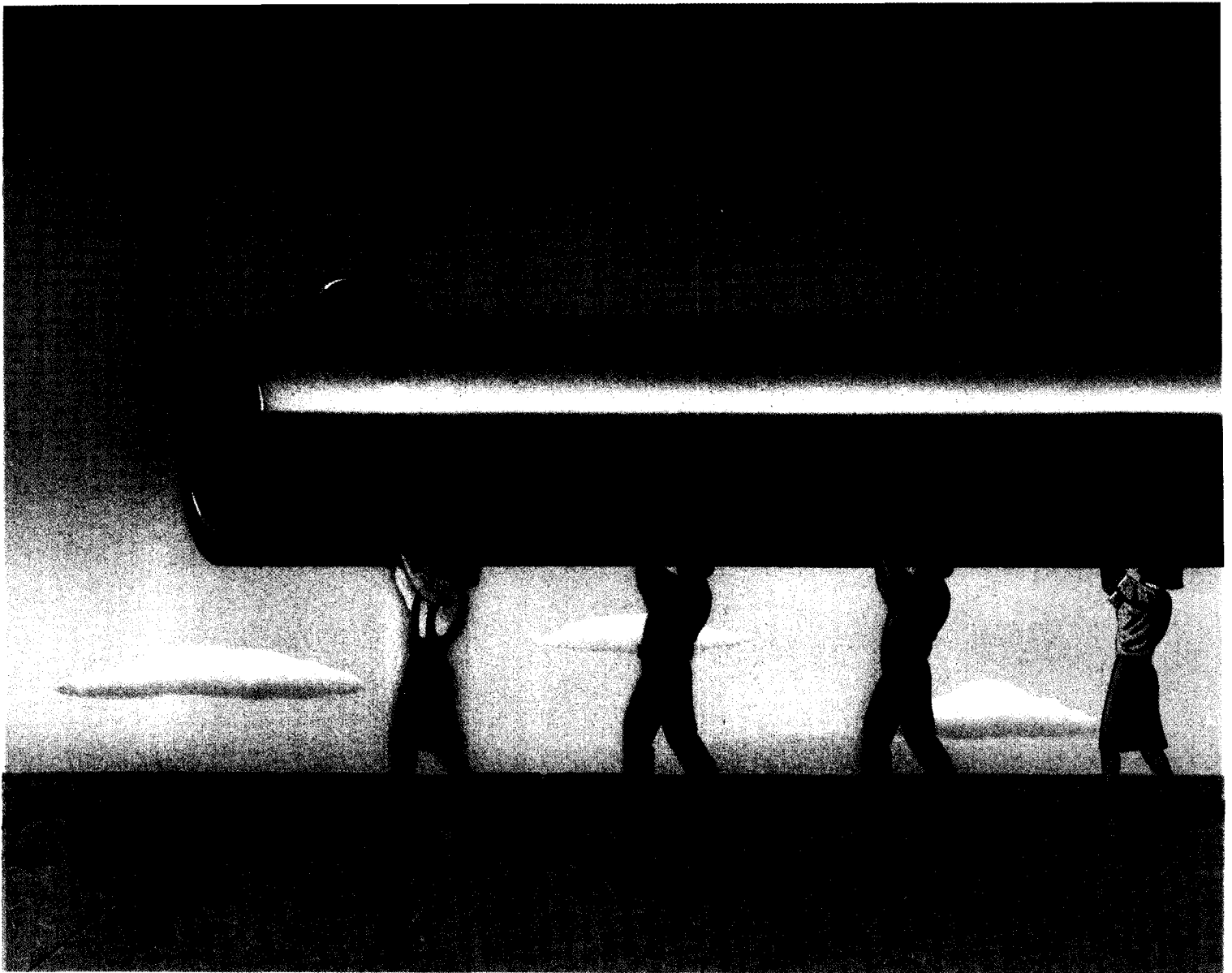


cer would face not 11.45 times as many violent crimes as his predecessor but 9.7 times as many. All this assumes that the number of violent crimes will not increase over the next several years; if it does, the number of violent crimes relative to police officers will again increase.

If we wished to return to the ratio of police officers to violent crimes which gave many of us peace and security in the 1960s, we would have to add not 100,000 new police officers but about *five million*. When this number was mentioned to some Department of Justice staffers recently, they giggled; and it is understandable that the idea of such a national mobilization, such tremendous expenditures, should strike them as laughable. However, the American people are already paying out of their own pockets for an additional 1.5 million private police officers, to provide, at least in part, the protection that the public police are unable to furnish.

Private police guard office buildings, shopping malls,

apartments. Businesses pay them to patrol certain downtown streets, such as those around New York's Grand Central Station and public library. And they patrol residential areas. Private patrol cars thread the streets of Los Angeles, and more than fifty applications are before the city council to close off streets so as to make those patrols more effective. Across the country much new housing is being built in gated communities, walled off and privately guarded. We are well on the way to having several million police officers, and the next decade will bring us much closer. If current trends continue, however, most of the new officers will be privately paid, available for the protection not of the citizenry as a whole—and certainly not of citizens living in the most violent ghettos and housing projects—but of the commercial and residential enclaves that can afford them. Between these enclaves there will be plenty of room to lose a country.



ONE LONG DESCENDING NIGHT

PEOPLE hire police officers because they are afraid—above all of violence. Their fear is occasionally a source of puzzlement and mild disdain in the press, which cannot understand why so many Americans say that crime is the nation's most urgent problem and their own greatest fear. Indeed, all through 1993 official agencies claimed that crime was declining. The FBI said that violent crime in the first six months was down three percent overall, and down eight percent in the Northeast.

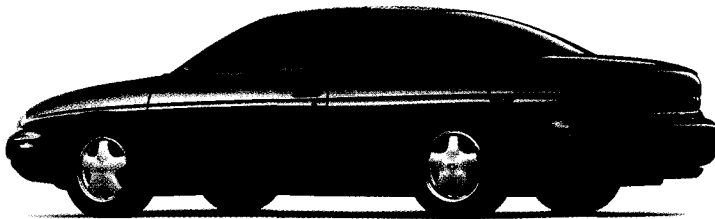
For crime to be down even eight percent would mean that a precinct that had had a hundred murders in 1992 had ninety-two in 1993. But nobody came around on New Year's Day of 1993 to give everyone's memory a rinse, obliterating the horrors of the previous year. The effect is not disjunctive

but cumulative. By the end of 1993, ninety-two additional people had been murdered.

Many people can also remember years before 1992, in large cities and in small. In 1960, for example, six murders, four rapes, and sixteen robberies were reported in New Haven, Connecticut. In 1990 that city, with a population 14 percent smaller, had thirty-one murders, 168 rapes, and 1,784 robberies: robbery increased more than 100 times, or *10,000 percent*, over thirty years. In this perspective a one-year decrease of seven percent would seem less than impressive.

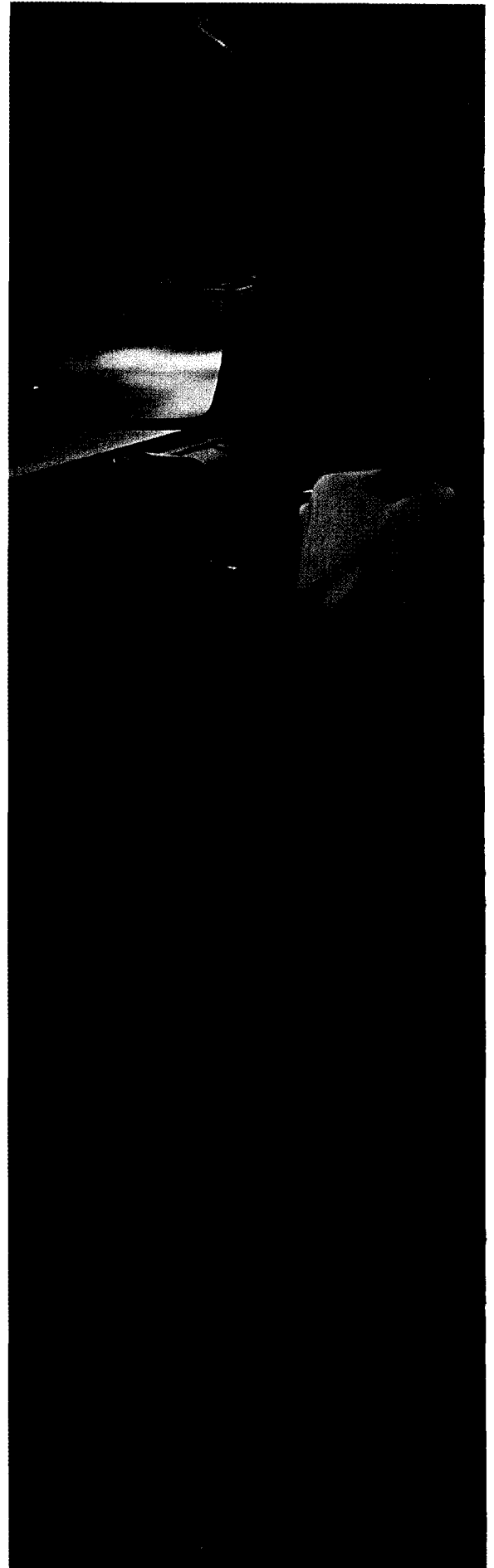
New Haven is not unique. In Milwaukee in 1965 there were twenty-seven murders, thirty-three rapes, and 214 robberies, and in 1990, when the city was smaller, there were 165 murders, 598 rapes, and 4,472 robberies: robbery became twenty-one times as frequent in twenty-five years. New York City in 1951 had 244 murders; every year for more than a decade it has had nearly 2,000 murders.

Even in the caring,
sharing '90s, you can still use
a little personal space.



After all the time you've spent raising your sensitivity to the needs of others, you could probably use some time for yourself. Fortunately, the all new Monte Carlo is here. It's a very personal space, designed for a very personal fit. It's a place where the only relationship that matters is the one between your driving instincts and a car engineered to follow them unerringly. Where you can relax undisturbed in the comfort of an ergonomically designed driver's seat, within an impeccably designed cabin. Of course, you could decide to share all this with someone special. But that's completely up to you.

The New Monte Carlo





We experience the crime wave not as separate moments in time but as one long descending night. A loved one lost echoes in the heart for decades. Every working police officer knows the murder scene: the shocked family and neighbors, too numb yet to grieve; fear and desolation spreading to the street, the workplace, the school, the home, creating an invisible but indelible network of anguish and loss. We have experienced more than 20,000 such scenes every year for more than a decade, and few of them have been truly forgotten.

The memory of a mugging may fade but does not vanish. Nine percent of those responding to a recent poll in *New York Newsday* said that they had been mugged or assaulted in the past year. This suggests an annual total for the city of more than 600,000 muggings and assaults (remember also that many people, in poor neighborhoods especially, are assaulted more than once). That would be four times as many robberies and assaults as are reported to the police department. The Department of Justice says that not three quarters but only half of all violent crimes go unreported: it may be that many report as having happened "last year" an incident from more than a year ago.

Nevertheless, these are stunning numbers, especially when some other common crimes are added in. Eight percent of those polled (implying 560,000 New Yorkers) said their houses or apartments had been broken into; 22 percent (1,540,000) said their cars had been broken into. In all, 42 percent (nearly three million New Yorkers) said they had been the victims of crime in 1993. And, of course, about

2,000 were murdered. This is what it means to say that crime in 1993 was down eight percent.

In October of 1994 the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that violent crime had not, after all, declined in 1993 but had risen by 5.6 percent.

Several years ago the Department of Justice estimated that 83 percent of all Americans would be victims of violent crime at least once in their lives. About a quarter would be victims of three or more violent crimes. We are progressing steadily toward the fulfillment of that prediction.

A TWENTY-YEAR FRAUD EXPOSED

OUR greatest fear is of violence from a nameless, faceless stranger. Officials have always reassured citizens by stating that the great majority of murders, at any rate, are committed by a relative or an acquaintance of the victim's; a 1993 Department of Justice report said the figure for 1988 was eight out of ten.

Unfortunately, that report described only murders in which the killer was known to prosecutors and an arrest was made. It did not mention that more and more killers remain unknown and at liberty after a full police investigation; every year the police make arrests in a smaller proportion of murder cases. In our largest cities the police now make arrests in fewer than three out of five murder cases. In other words, two out of every five killers are completely untouched by the law.

MOLYBDENUM

(mō•līb'dē•nŭm; mōl'īb•dē'nŭm)

The year before Chernobyl I spent evenings
abstracting translations of reports
by engineers on Soviet nuclear-power plants.
Many times I typed the word *molybdenum*,
uncertain how it might be said.

Three dollars an item, eight items an hour,
faking the Authoritative Version,
I felt queasy, that a phrase deleted
might make dangerous misinformation
of the nonsense in my head.

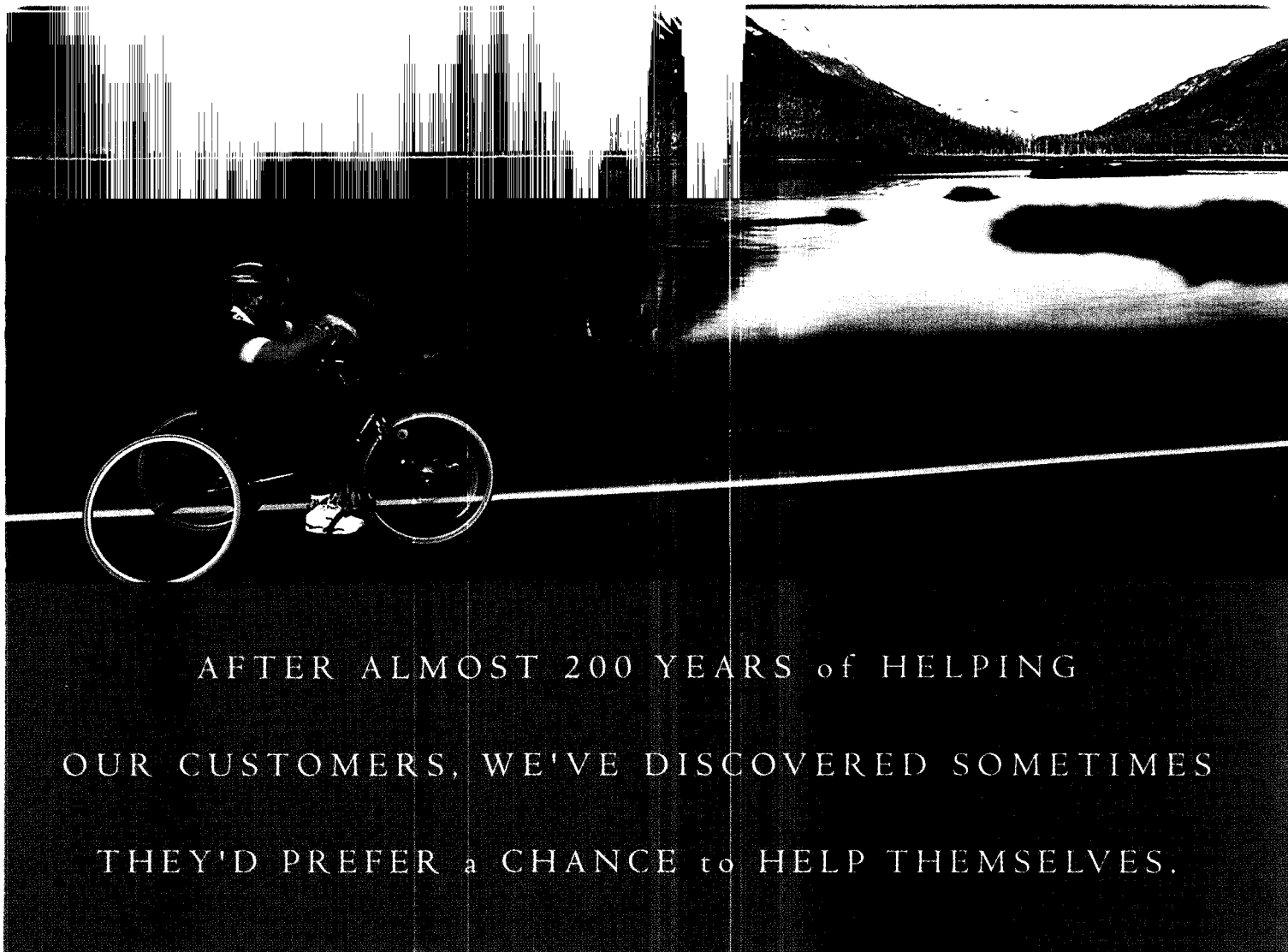
This was the year of our first baby, when I worked
four jobs, and wrote before dawn every day
devotions on the hours and pastiches

of Lao-tzu, the sense of the originals
as vague to me as anything in the reports.

That next year, in a magazine, I saw
the radiation babies, stillborn, and in pain,
and yellowish eruptions on the forearm
of a young man poisoned cleaning up.
He died, the caption said, in seven months.

And still, I want to make my part make sense,
the way men stay at work to keep their jobs:
one wrings plutonium into a bucket
with his bare hands; and another
writes about it for no one to read.

—BROOKS HAXTON



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OUR CUSTOMERS, WE'VE DISCOVERED SOMETIMES
THEY'D PREFER a CHANCE to HELP THEMSELVES.

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When a killing is a family tragedy, or takes place between friends or acquaintances, the police make an arrest virtually every time. When the police make an arrest, they say that the crime has been “cleared”; the percentage of crimes for which they make arrests is referred to as the clearance rate. Because murder has historically been a matter principally among families and friends, the homicide clearance rate in the past was often greater than 95 percent, even in the largest cities. As late as 1965 the national homicide clearance rate was 91 percent. However, as crime has spread and changed its character over the past generation, clearance rates have steadily dropped. In the past two years the national homicide clearance rate averaged 65.5 percent.

annual report on crime in the United States for 1993, which was released last December. The FBI now estimates that 53 percent of all homicides are being committed by strangers. For more than two decades, as homicide clearance rates have plummeted, law-enforcement agencies have continued to assure the public that four fifths of all killings are the result of personal passions. Thus were we counseled to fear our loved ones above all, to regard the family hearth as the most dangerous place. Now that falsehood has been unmasked: the FBI tells us that actually 12 percent of all homicides take place within the family. I have heard no public official anywhere in the United States say a word about any of this.



Our greatest fear is of violence from a nameless, faceless stranger. Law-enforcement agencies have always reassured citizens by stating that the great majority of murders are committed by a relative or an acquaintance of the victim's. Now that falsehood has been unmasked.

The rate in the sixty-two largest cities is 60.5 percent. In the very largest cities—those with populations over a million—the rate is 58.3 percent.

The missing killers are almost certainly not family members, friends, or neighbors. Rather, they are overwhelmingly strangers to their victims, and their acts are called “stranger murders.” Here is the true arithmetic: The 40 percent of killings in which city police departments are unable to identify and arrest perpetrators must overwhelmingly be counted as stranger murders; let us assume that 90 percent of them are committed by killers unknown to the victims. That number is equivalent to 36 percent of the total of all city murders. We know that of the 60 percent of killers the police do succeed in arresting, 20 percent have murdered strangers. That is, they have committed 12 percent of all murders. As best we can count, then, at least 48 percent of city murders are now being committed by killers who are not relatives or acquaintances of the victims.

This simple arithmetic has been available to the government and its experts for years. However, the first government document to acknowledge these facts was the FBI's

There is another important aspect to the arithmetic: the odds facing a robber or holdup man as he decides whether to let his victim live. Again, at least 48 percent of city homicides are stranger murders, but only 12 percent of city homicides result in arrest. That is, the odds that a holdup man who kills a stranger will be arrested appear to be one in four. The Department of Justice tells us that of all those who are arrested for murder, 73 percent will be convicted of some crime; and when convicted, the killers of strangers tend to get the heaviest penalties. Nevertheless, the cumulative chances of getting clean away with the murder of a stranger are greater than 80 percent. Street thugs may be smarter than they are usually given credit for being. They do not consult government reports, but they appear to know the facts. New York bodega workers have experienced an increasing incidence of holdups ending in murder even when they have offered no resistance. Killing eliminates the possibility of witness identification.

Murder is the most frightening crime, but is the least common. Much more frequent are robbery and assault. Robbery, the forcible taking of property from the person of the victim,

is the crime most likely to be committed by a stranger; 75 percent of victims are robbed by strangers. Aggravated assault, the use of a weapon or other major force with the intention of causing serious bodily harm, is the most common violent crime; 58 percent of aggravated assaults are committed by strangers.

Attacks across racial lines are a special case of crimes by strangers. Most crimes, including 80 percent of violent crimes, are committed by persons of the same race as their victims. However, the experiences of blacks and whites diverge in some respects. In cases involving a lone offender, 56 percent of white and Hispanic robbery victims report that their assailant was white or Hispanic and 40 percent that he was black. When two or more robbers commit the crime, white and Hispanic victims 38 percent of the time report them to be white or Hispanic, 46 percent of the time black, and 10 percent of the time mixed. About eight percent of black victims, in contrast, are robbed by whites or Hispanics, and more than 85 percent by blacks, whether the offenders are alone or in groups. Blacks and whites are robbed equally—75 percent of the time—by strangers, but as these figures indicate, whites are far more likely to be robbed by strangers of a different race.

This result occurs because there are many more white people and many more white victims: 87 percent of all violent crimes are committed against whites and Hispanics. In robberies lone white offenders select white victims 96 percent of the time, and lone black offenders select white victims 62 percent of the time. White rapists select white victims 97 percent of the time; black rapists select white victims 48 percent of the time. Whites committing aggravated assault attack blacks in three percent of cases; blacks commit about half their assaults against whites.

When all violent crimes are taken together, 58 percent of white victims and 54 percent of black victims report that their assailant was a stranger. Citizens of all races who are fearful of random violence have good reason for their concern. Storekeepers, utility workers, police officers, and ordinary citizens out for a carton of milk or a family dinner are all increasingly at risk.

TOWARD A RACE BEHIND BARS

IN 1990 federal, state, and local governments combined spent about \$8,921 per person. According to the Department of Justice, these governments spent \$299 per person—about 3.3 percent of total public expenditures—on all civil- and criminal-justice activities, including \$128 per person on domestic police protection. On national defense and international relations they spent \$1,383 per person.

Spending on the Armed Forces has historically risen to meet perceived threats from hostile nations, or in case of rebellion. Sharply rising crime rates have not brought equiva-

lent increases in police forces. From 1971 to 1990, as the rates of homicide and other violent crimes soared, per person expenditures (in constant dollars) on state and local police forces increased by only 12 percent.

Spending did increase on prisons—by more than 150 percent. In 1992 state and federal prisons held 883,656 inmates (local jails held another 444,584). Out of every 100,000 residents of the United States, 344 were in prison (another 174 were in jail). Prison populations increased another seven percent in 1993, by which year 2.9 times as many people were incarcerated as had been in 1980.

The overwhelming majority of prison inmates are male. Of the 789,700 male inmates in 1992, 51 percent, or 401,700, were black, and nearly all the remaining 388,000 white. (Here Hispanics are included in both categories; according to the Department of Justice, 93 percent of Hispanic prisoners describe themselves as white and seven percent as black. Asians and Native Americans make up at most 2.5 percent of all prisoners.) Rates of imprisonment by race are therefore very different. In 1992, of every 100,000 white and Hispanic male residents, 372 were prisoners. Of every 100,000 black male residents, 2,678 were prisoners.

The heaviest rates of imprisonment affect men aged twenty to forty. Although the overall imprisonment rate for black men is 2,678 per 100,000, it reaches 7,210 for every 100,000 aged twenty-five to twenty-nine, and 6,299 for those aged thirty to thirty-four. At any one time six to seven percent of black men at these critical ages are in state and federal prisons.

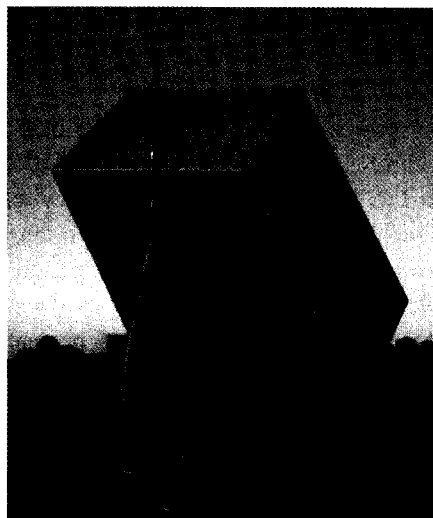
(Most arrests, and most new prison sentences, are not for violent crimes. In 1992 only 28.5 percent of offenders sentenced to state prisons had been convicted of violent offenses; 31.2 percent had been convicted of property offenses, and 30.5 percent of drug offenses. These numbers represent a major change in just over a decade: in 1980, 48.2 percent of newly sentenced offenders had been convicted of violent offenses, and only 6.8 percent of drug offenses. The Department of Justice has argued that many people convicted of nonviolent drug crimes have also committed violent offenses. But there can be no question that the police are making more drug arrests and relatively fewer arrests for violent crimes. For the past five years drug arrests have averaged one million a year, and arrests for all violent crimes combined about 600,000.)

A study was made of black men aged eighteen to thirty-four in the District of Columbia. On any given day in 1991, 15 percent of the men were in prison, 21 percent were on probation or parole, and six percent were being sought by the police or were on bond awaiting trial. The total thus involved with the criminal-justice system was 42 percent. The study estimated that 70 percent of black men in the District of Columbia would be arrested before the age of thirty-five, and that 85 percent would be arrested at some point in their lives.

There have been no studies of the effects of such high im-

prisonment rates on the wider black society—for example, on the children of prisoners. No government or private agency has suggested any way to lighten the influence of paternal and sibling imprisonment on children, or how to balance the potential value of such an effort against the need to suppress violent crimes. Although the crime bill will sub-

pression. It is at any rate certain that hundreds of thousands of the children so abandoned have become in their turn a major cause of instability. Most notably they have tended to commit crimes, especially violent crimes, out of all proportion to their numbers. Of all juveniles confined for violent offenses today, less than 30 percent grew up with both parents.



The teenage and young adult population stagnated or actually declined over the past decade. Crime has been rising because this smaller population has grown more violent. Now it is about to get larger in size. As a result, we will soon witness an epidemic of teenage crime.

stantially expand prison space, no one has asked how much further we can go—whether it is possible, practically, socially, or morally, to imprison some larger proportion of the black male population at any one time.

WHAT'S ALREADY SPOKEN FOR

IN 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned that a growing proportion of black children were being born to single mothers. When such large numbers of children were abandoned by their fathers and brought up by single mothers, he said, the result was sure to be wild violence and social chaos. He was excoriated as a racist and the subject was abandoned. The national rate of illegitimacy among blacks that year was 26 percent.

It took just over a decade for the black illegitimacy rate to reach 50 percent. And in 1990, twenty-five years after Moynihan's warning, two thirds of black children were born to single mothers, many of them teenagers. Only a third of black children lived with both parents even in the first three years of their lives. Seven percent of all black children and five percent of black children under the age of three were living with neither a father nor a mother in the house. The rate of illegitimacy more than doubled in one generation.

Social disorder—in its many varieties, and with the assistance of government policies—can perhaps be said to have caused the sudden collapse of family institutions and social bonds that had survived three centuries of slavery and op-

pression. It is at any rate certain that hundreds of thousands of the children so abandoned have become in their turn a major cause of instability. Most notably they have tended to commit crimes, especially violent crimes, out of all proportion to their numbers. Of all juveniles confined for violent offenses today, less than 30 percent grew up with both parents.

How many killers are there, and who are they? In 1990 a total of 24,932 homicides were reported. Of all killers identified by the nation's police forces and reported to the Department of Justice for that year, 43.7 percent were white and Hispanic and 54.7 percent were black. Whites made up 83.9 percent of the population that year, and blacks 12.3 percent. The rate of homicide committed by whites was thus 5.2 per 100,000, and by blacks 44.7 per 100,000—or about eight times as great. In the large counties analyzed by the Department of Justice, 62 percent of identified killers were black. This is equivalent to a black homicide rate of 50.7 per 100,000—close to ten times the rate among other citizens. Serial killers and mass murderers, however, are overwhelmingly white.

Of the urban killers identified by the Department of Justice in 1988, 90 percent were male. Virtually none were aged fourteen or younger, but 16 percent were aged fifteen to nineteen, 24 percent were twenty to twenty-four, and 20 percent were twenty-five to twenty-nine.

The white and black populations each suffered about 12,000 homicides in 1990. But the black population base is smaller, and the rate at which blacks fall victim is much higher. The victimization rate for white males was 9.0 per 100,000, and for white females 2.8 per 100,000. For black males it was an astonishing 69.2, and for black females it was 13.5. According to the Department of Justice, one out of every twenty-one black men can expect to be murdered. This is a death rate double that of American servicemen in the Second World War.

Prospects for the future are apparent in the facts known about children already born. This is what Senator Moynihan means when he says the next thirty years are "already spoken for."

We first notice the children of the ghetto when they grow muscles—at about the age of fifteen. The children born in 1965 reached their fifteenth year in 1980, and 1980 and 1981 set new records for criminal violence in the United States, as teenage and young adult blacks ripped at the fabric of life in the black inner city. Nevertheless, of all the black children who reached physical maturity in those years, three quarters had been born to a married mother and father. Not until 1991 did we experience the arrival in their mid-teens of the first group of black youths fully half of whom had been born to single mothers—the cohort born in 1976. Criminal violence particularly associated with young men and boys reached new peaks of destruction in black communities in 1990 and 1991.

In the year 2000 the black youths born in 1985 will turn fifteen. Three fifths of them were born to single mothers,

many of whom were drug-addicted; one in fourteen will have been raised with neither parent at home; unprecedented numbers will have been subjected to beatings and other abuse; and most will have grown up amid the utter chaos pervading black city neighborhoods. It is supremely necessary to change the conditions that are producing such cohorts. But no matter what efforts we now undertake, we have already assured the creation of more very violent young men than any reasonable society can tolerate, and their numbers will grow inexorably for every one of the next twenty years.

In absolute numbers the teenage and young adult population aged fifteen to twenty-four stagnated or actually declined over the past decade. Crime has been rising because this smaller population has grown disproportionately more violent. Now it is about to get larger in size. James Fox, a dean at Northeastern University, in Boston, has shown that from 1965 to 1985 the national homicide rate tracked almost exactly the proportion of the population aged eighteen to twenty

Crime as a Cause of Poverty

*(From a speech by Congressman John Lewis,
Democrat of Georgia)*

ALL across the nation black communities are under an assault of crime and violence that is without precedent in our history. Under the savage assault it is not too much to say that the low-income black community is disintegrating, and violence and crime are the order of the day.

The facts of this tragedy are well known to all. At the present rates one out of every twenty black men will die from homicide. . . . Barely a third of the youngest black children now live with two parents; nearly a tenth live with neither parent. When schools dare to record the truth, the dropout rates are a continuing disaster. Black children are the principal victims of child abuse and neglect. The leading cause of death for black children aged one to four is fire.

There are not the normal patterns of life in black society. Nothing in the

long history of blacks in America, nothing in their painful struggle to reach equality in the modern world—nothing suggests the terrible destruction blacks are visiting upon each other today. Blacks in our lifetime have suffered and survived brutal racism. They did not survive by killing each other, but as other Americans, by giving each other aid and support, comfort and courage and love. The best city neighborhoods today might well envy the peace and physical security of Harlem or other black ghettos of the 1950s.

The causes of the deterioration, the roots of our present crisis, are many. But surely the most immediate and the most powerful is the fact of the violence itself. Increasingly over the past thirty years, crime and violence have been allowed to run virtually unchecked through poor black communities. This widening gyre of de-

struction first stripped communities of businesses and jobs. It broke down housing. It made schools places of fear, where a quarter of the students might carry weapons for self-defense, and learning was always a casualty. For as life became more dangerous, more subject to hazardous fate, so it became progressively difficult to raise children in the settled peace they require. And more and more the most conspicuous models of success were the racketeer, the pimp, and the insidious drug dealer. So more and more children, deprived of reasonable nurture, were sucked into the vortex, to become in their turn the abusers and the destroyers of the children who came after them.

It is not only poverty that has caused crime. In a very real sense it is crime that has caused poverty, and is the most powerful cause of poverty today. ☛



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ty-four. Suddenly, in 1985, the two curves diverged sharply. The number of young adults as a proportion of the population declined; but the overall homicide rate went up, because among this smaller group the homicide rate increased by 65 percent in just eight years. Among those aged fourteen to seventeen, the next group of young adults, the homicide rate more than doubled. What we experienced from 1985 on was a conjunction of two terrible arrivals. One train carried the legacy of the 1970s, the children of the explosion of illegitimacy and paternal abandonment. Crack arrived on the same timetable, and unloaded at the same station.

Fox shows further that by the year 2005 the population aged fourteen to seventeen will have increased by a remarkable 23 percent. Professor John DeJuliio, of Princeton University, predicts that the number of homicides may soon rise

By 1976, with the great postwar crime wave under way, more than 21 percent of the population reported owning handguns—an increase of 75 percent. The largest increases were among nonwhites (by 99 percent), college graduates (by 147 percent), and Jews (by 679 percent, to a total of 14.8 percent reporting handgun ownership, which left them well behind Protestants but ahead of Catholics). By 1978 the estimate of total number of guns owned had increased to roughly 120 million.

In every year since, at least four million new guns have been manufactured or imported. In 1993 there were 5.1 million guns manufactured and another 2.9 million imported. Of the eight million new guns in 1993, half—3.9 million—were handguns. The current estimate is that more than 200 million guns are in private hands.



If we wished to return to the ratio of police officers to violent crimes which gave many of us peace and security in the 1960s, we would have to add not 100,000 new police officers but about five million. Told this recently, some Department of Justice staffers giggled.

to 35,000 or 40,000 a year, with other violent offenses rising proportionally. Fox calls what we are about to witness an “epidemic” of teenage crime. He does not give a name to our present condition.

GUNS

IT is a commonplace that many crimes are committed with guns, particularly handguns. In 1993, 69.6 percent of all homicides were committed by gun, four fifths of these by handgun. Guns were also used in 42.4 percent of all robberies and 25.1 percent of aggravated assaults. The total of such gun felonies reported to the police was about 571,000.

As long as surveys have asked the question, about half of all American households have answered that they own at least one gun. Patterns of ownership, however, have changed. In the 1960s weapons used primarily for sport—rifles and shotguns—made up 80 percent of the approximately 80 million guns in private hands. About 12 percent of the population reported owning one or more handguns.

Twenty states allow any law-abiding citizen to carry a gun concealed on his or her person, and fourteen more states are actively considering such laws. In some of the states where the laws have passed, about two percent (Oregon and Florida) or three percent (Pennsylvania) of the state’s population have applied for and received a permit to carry a concealed handgun at all times. There is evidence that many people own and carry handguns without permits. One 1991 survey reported that a third of all Americans own handguns, another that seven percent carry them outside the home. A quarter of small business establishments may keep firearms for protection.

Last year *The New York Times* said that the city’s bodegas had become “Islands Under Siege,” in which fifty store workers were killed in a year. It reported on Omar Rosario, the manager of a grocery store whose previous owner was killed in a holdup. Rosario prepares for work by donning a bulletproof vest and sliding a nine-millimeter semi-automatic into his waistband. When a young man with one arm hidden inside his coat enters the store, “Mr. Rosario takes out

his pistol and eases it halfway into the pocket of his pants, his finger on the trigger. He faces the man and lets him see the gun in his hand. He wants to make it clear that if the young man pulls a gun, he will be killed."

Professor Gary Kleck, of Florida State University, has made a close examination of citizens' use of firearms for self-defense, including in "civilian legal defensive homicides." Self-defense is not a crime, and most defensive uses of firearms, even when criminals are killed, are not routinely reported to the FBI. On the basis of local studies Kleck estimates that at least 1,500 citizens used guns to kill criminals in 1980. This is nearly three times the number of criminals killed by the police. The Department of Justice thinks these numbers may be too high. Nevertheless, it is evident that Omar Rosario is not the only citizen with his finger on the trigger.

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

FOR more than twenty years the children of the ghetto have witnessed violent death as an almost routine occurrence. They have seen it on their streets, in their schools, in their families, and on TV. They have lived with constant fear. Many have come to believe that they will not live to see twenty-five. These are often children whose older brothers, friends, and uncles have taught them that only the strong and the ruthless survive. Prison does not frighten them—it is a rite of passage that a majority of their peers may have experienced. Too many have learned to kill without remorse, for a drug territory or for an insult, because of a look or a bump on the sidewalk, or just to do it: why not?

These young people have been raised in the glare of ceaseless media violence and incitement to every depravity of act and spirit. Movies may feature scores of killings in two hours' time, vying to show methods ever more horrific; many are quickly imitated on the street. Television commercials teach that a young man requires a new pair of \$120 sneakers each week. Major corporations make and sell records exhorting their listeners to brutalize Koreans, rob store owners, rape women, kill the police. Ashamed and guilt-ridden, elite opinion often encourages even hoodlums to carry a sense of entitlement and grievance against society and its institutions.

These lessons are being taught to millions of children as I write and you read. They have already been taught to the age groups that will reach physical maturity during the rest of this century.

The worst lesson we have taught these benighted children I have saved for last, because it is a lesson we have also taught ourselves: We will do almost anything not to have to act to defend ourselves, our country, or our character as people of decency and strength. We have fled from our cities, virtually abandoning great institutions such as the public schools. We have permitted the spread within our country of

wastelands ruled not by the Constitution and lawful authority but by the anarchic force of merciless killers. We have muted our dialogue and hidden our thoughts. We have abandoned millions of our fellow citizens—people of decency and honor trying desperately to raise their children in love and hope—to every danger and degraded assault. We have become isolated from one another, dispirited about any possibility of collective or political action to meet this menace. We shrink in fear of teenage thugs on every street. More important, we shrink even from contemplating the forceful collective action we know is required. We abandon our self-respect and our responsibility to ourselves and our posterity.

How to change all this, how to recover heart and spirit, how to save the lives and souls of millions of children, and how to save ourselves from this scourge of violent anarchy—in short, how to deal with things as they are, how to respond to the implacable and undeniable numbers: this will be the real measure and test of our political system. But more than that, it will be the measure of our own days and work, the test of our own lives and heritage.

WHERE DO WE START?

A MODEST RADICALISM

IN the past decade 200,000 of our citizens have been killed and millions wounded. If we assume, with the FBI, that 47 percent of them were killed by friends and family members, that leaves 106,000 dead at the hands of strangers. Ten years of war in Vietnam killed 58,000 Americans. Over an equal period we have had almost the exact equivalent of two Vietnam Wars right here at home.

Whether fighting the war or fighting against the war, participants and opponents alike engaged Vietnam with fury and passion and a desperate energy. Were we to find such energy, such passion, now, how might we use it? Where would we start?

I suggest simplicity. If your territory and your citizens are under constant deadly assault, the first thing you do is *protect them*.

To do this we need forces. We need a very large number of additional police officers: at least half a million in the next five years, and perhaps more thereafter. We do not need more private police, who protect only the circumscribed property of better-off citizens who can afford to pay; we need public police, whose mission is the protection of all citizens, and who are available for work in the ghettos and housing projects where most of the dying is taking place.

If we as a society expect black citizens to construct reasonable lives, we cannot continue to abandon so many of them and their children to criminal depredation. If we expect children to respect law and the rights of others, it would seem elementary that we must respect the law and their rights enough to keep them from getting murdered.

We need a larger police force not to imprison more of our

fellow citizens but to liberate them. The police need not function as the intake valve of a criminal-justice system devoted to the production of more prison inmates, of whom we already have more than is healthy; their true role is to suppress violence and criminal activity, to protect public space that now serves as the playground and possession of the violent. The role of the police is to guard schools and homes, neighborhoods and commerce, and to protect life; they should represent the basic codes and agreements by which we live with one another. Today's vastly undermanned police forces, whose officers race from call to call, taking endless reports of crimes they were not around to prevent, do not control the streets. They do not exercise and cannot embody the authority for which we look to government. Rather, it is the most violent young men of the street who set the tone and filter the light in which the children of the city are growing. *That* is what we need at least half a million new officers just to begin to change.

Some will ask how we are to afford the \$30 billion or so a year that this would cost. The question has a ready answer. We have a gross domestic product of more than \$6 trillion, and a federal budget of more than \$1.6 trillion. President Clinton has requested \$261.4 billion for defense against foreign enemies who killed fewer than a hundred Americans in all of last year. It would be silly to suggest that the federal government should not or cannot spend an eighth as much—two percent of even a shrunken federal budget—to defend the nation against domestic enemies who killed more than 10,000 people who were strangers to them in 1994, and who will surely kill more in every year that lies ahead.

This is not a complete program, because this is not the time for a complete program. *We have to stop the killing.* Beyond doubt we must reform welfare, minimize illegitimacy, change the schools, strengthen employment opportunities, end racism. In the midst of this war, while the killing continues, all that is just talk. And dishonest talk besides: there can be no truth to our public discussions while whites are filled with fear of black violence, and blacks live every day with the fear and bitter knowledge that they and their children have been abandoned to the rule of criminals. If some foreign enemy had invaded New England, slaughtering its people and plundering its wealth, would we be debating agricultural subsidies and the future of Medicaid while complaining that the deficit prevented us from enlarging the Army or buying more ammunition? Would the budget really force us to abandon New Hampshire? Why is this case different?

NONE OF THIS IS NECESSARY

SOME people will say that I propose an army of occupation. But all too many black citizens already live in territories occupied by hostile bands of brigands. How can these citizens be freed except by forces devoted to their liberation?

It is true that the police, especially in the ghettos of older cities, have often been corrupt, brutal, and ineffective, although they are almost always better than most of their critics. The remedy for bad policing is for good people to join the police force and make it better: that is why the one truly promising feature of the 1994 crime bill is the creation of a prototype Police Corps, a police ROTC that will offer four-year college scholarships to the best and most committed of our young people in return for four years of police service following their graduation. Now and for many years into the future the opportunity to give the greatest service to one's fellow citizens will be as a member of a police force—the one truly indispensable agency of a free and civil government.

Others will say—not openly, because this kind of thing is never said openly—that it's hopeless, and that the best we can hope for is that the killers will kill one another and leave the rest of us alone. Indeed, a visitor from another planet might well conclude that only such a belief could explain our society's otherwise inexplicable passivity. History should save us from such vile and horrible thoughts. Despite all vicissitudes, within two generations of Emancipation black families had achieved levels of stability and nurture comparable or superior to those of many immigrant groups. The long history of black people in America has not been one of violent or cruel conduct beyond the national norm. Rather, it is a story of great heroism and dignity, of a steady upward course from slavery to just the other day.

The collapse of the black lower class is a creation not of history but of this generation. It has been a deliberate if misguided act of government to create a welfare system that began the destruction of black family life. It was the dominant culture that desanctified morality, celebrated license, and glorified fecklessness; as the columnist Joe Klein has observed, it is in moral conduct above all that the rich catch cold and the poor get pneumonia. It was stupidity and cowardice, along with a purposeful impulse toward justice, that led the entire governmental apparatus, the system of law enforcement and social control, to cede the black ghettos to self-rule and virtual anarchy in the 1960s and 1970s, and to abandon them entirely since. It is the evident policy of the entertainment industry to seek profit by exploiting the most degraded aspects of human and social character. None of this is necessary. All of it can be changed.

I have spoken of the need to change conditions among blacks, because they are experiencing the greatest suffering and the gravest danger today. But let none of us pretend that the bell tolls only for blacks; there is no salvation for one race alone, no hope for separate survival. At stake for all of us is the future of American cities, the promise of the American nation, and the survival of our Constitution and of American democracy itself. ☸



SOME PRESIDENTS WOULD HAVE SENT IN THE POLICE. JOHN KENNEDY SENT COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS.

It's a damp, chilly afternoon in 1962. In front of the White House, a Ban the Bomb demonstration is taking place. Among the protesters is a two-time Nobel Prize winning scientist. John Kennedy is notified. Immediately, he sends out an urn of coffee, a plate of doughnuts and an invitation to the leaders to come inside and state their case.



Unusual actions for a Commander in Chief? Maybe. But John Kennedy didn't see merely another group of protesters that day. He saw a chance to encourage debate and dissent. The fact is, he often played host at small dinners with artists, scientists, writers and poets, because it gave him a chance to listen, provoke, and most importantly, learn. At The New Museum at the John F. Kennedy Library, you too will be invited to debate the issues of his presidency. Because here, you'll learn about the man and how he handled each moment. Call 617-929-4523 to learn more. Or visit today. Then stop by our coffee shop. Because, like those protesters in '62, you'll have a lot to talk about.

THE NEW MUSEUM AT THE JFK LIBRARY
Columbia Point, Boston

A Lamia in the Cévennes

by A. S. BYATT

IN the mid-1980s Bernard Lycett-Kean decided that Margaret Thatcher's Britain was uninhabitable, a land of dog eat dog, lung-corroding ozone, and floating money, of which there was at once far too much and far too little. He sold his West Hampstead flat and bought a small stone house on a Cévenol hillside. He had three rooms and a large barn, which he weatherproofed, using it as a studio in winter and as a storehouse in summer. He did not know how he would take to solitude, and laid in a large quantity of red wine, of which he drank a good deal at first, and much less afterward. He discovered that the effect of the air and the light and the extremes of heat and cold was enough—indeed, too much—without alcohol. He stood on the terrace in front of his house and battled with these things, with mistral and thunderbolts and howling clouds. The Cévennes is a place of extreme weather. There were days of white heat, and days of yellow heat, and days of burning blue heat. He produced some paintings of heat and light, with very little else in them, and some other paintings of the small river that ran along the foot of the steep, terraced hill on which his house stood; these were dark green and dotted with the bright blue of the kingfisher and the electric blue of the dragonflies.

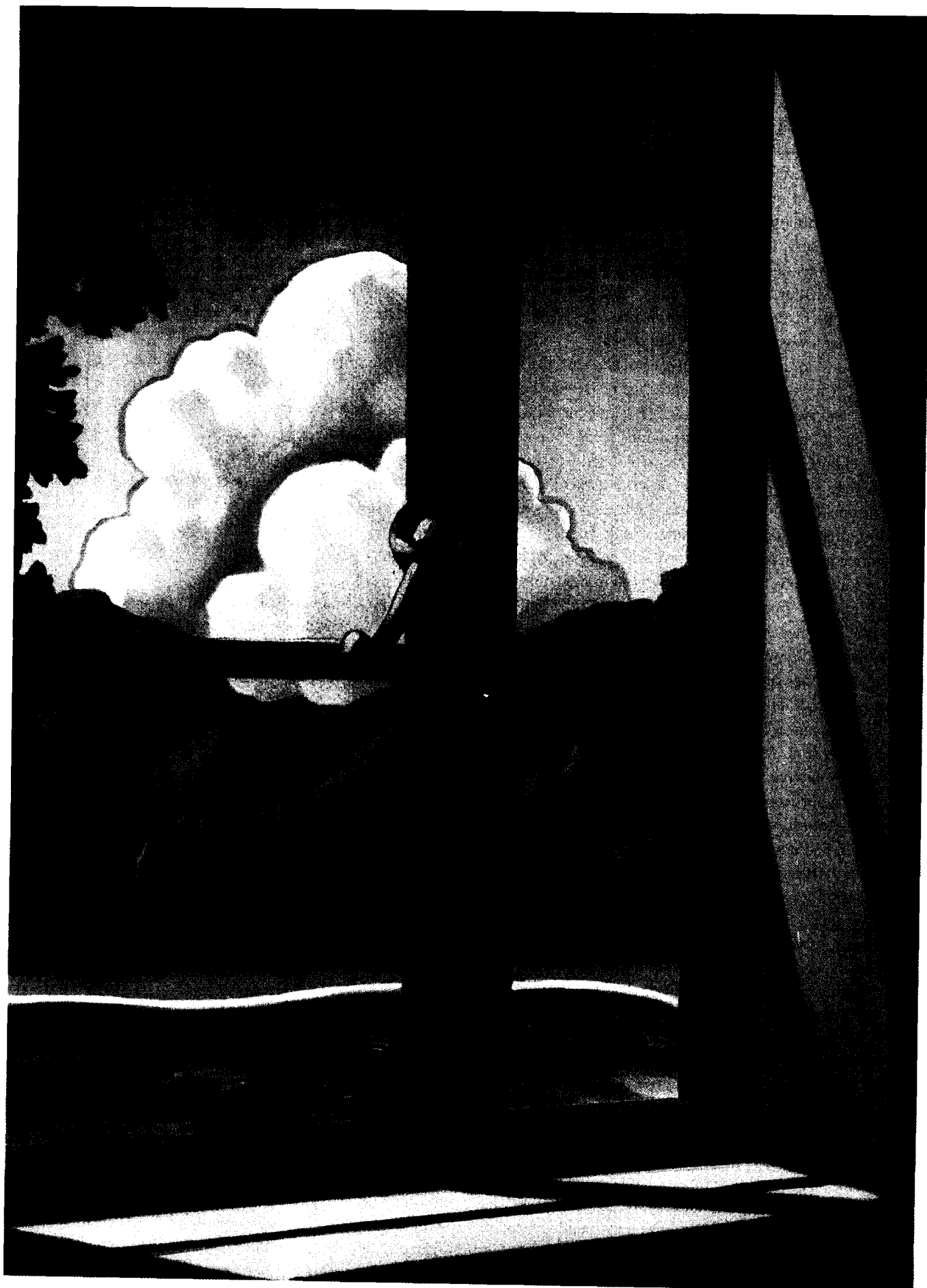
These paintings he packed in his van and took to London and sold for largish sums of the de-

spised money. He went to a private viewing of his own work and found that he had lost the habit of conversation. He stared and snorted. He was a big man, a burly man, whose stare seemed aggressive when it was largely baffled. His old friends were annoyed. He himself found London just as rushing and evil-smelling and unreal as he had been imagining it. He hurried back to the Cévennes. With his earnings he built himself a swimming pool where once there had been a patch of baked mud and a few bushes.

“I am an
enchanted spirit,”
the snake said. “If you
will kiss my mouth, I
will become a most
beautiful woman;
and if you will
marry me, I will be
eternally faithful and
bring you power, and
riches, and knowledge
you never dreamed of.
But you must have
faith in me”

To say he built it is not quite right. It was built by the Jardinerie Emeraude, two enterprising young men, who dug and lined and carried mud and monstrous stones, and built a humming pump house full of taps and pipes and a swirling cauldron of filter sand. The pool was blue, a swimming-pool blue, lined with a glittering tile mosaic, and with a mosaic dolphin cavorting amiably in its depths—a dark-blue dolphin with a pale-blue eye. It was not a boring rectangular pool but an irregular, rounded triangle, hugging the contour of the terrace in which it lay. It had a white-stone rim, molded to the hand, delightful to touch when it was hot in the sun.

The two young men were surprised that Bernard wanted it blue. Blue was a little *moche*, they thought. People now were making pools steel-gray or emerald-green,



or even dark wine-red. But Bernard's mind was full of the blue dots that were visible across the southern mountains when one traveled from Paris to Montpellier by air. It was a recalcitrant blue, a blue that asked to be painted by David Hockney and only by David Hockney. He felt that something else could and must be done with that blue. It was a blue he needed to know and fight. His painting was combative painting. That blue, that amiable, non-natural aquamarine, was different in the uncompromising mountains from what it was in Hollywood. There were no naked male backsides by his pool, no umbrellas, no tennis courts. The river water was somber and weedy, full of little shoals of needlefish and their shadows, of curling water snakes and the triangular divisions of flow around pebbles and boulders. This mild blue, here, was to be seen in *that* terrain.

He swam more and more, trying to understand the blue, which was different when it was under the nose, ahead of the eyes, over and around the sweeping hands and the flickering toes and the groin and the armpits and the hairs of his chest, which held bubbles of air for a time. His shadow in the blue moved over a pale eggshell mosaic; it was a darker blue, with huge, paddle-shaped hands. The light changed, and with it, everything. The best days were under racing cloud, when the aquamarine took on a cool, gray tone, which was then chased back, or rolled away, by the flickering gold-in-blue of yellow light in liquid. In front of his prow, or chin, in the brightest lights moved a mesh of hexagonal threads, flashing rainbow colors, flashing liquid silver-gilt, with a hint of molten glass; on such days lines of liquid fire, rosy and yellow and clear, ran across the dolphin, who lent them a thread of intense blue. But the surface could be a reflective plane, with the trees hanging in it, with two white diagonals where the aluminum steps entered. The shadows of the sides were a deeper blue but not a deep blue, a blue not reflective and yet lying flatly *under* reflections. The pool was deep, for the Emeraude young men had envisaged much diving. The wind changed the surface, frilled and furred it, flecked it with diamond drops, shirred it and made a witless patchwork of its plane. His own motion changed the surface—the longer he swam, the faster he swam, the more the glassy hills and valleys chopped and changed and ran back on each other.

Swimming was *volupté*—he used the French word, because of Matisse. *Luxe, calme, et volupté*. Swimming was a strenuous battle with immense problems, of geometry, of chemistry, of apprehension, of style, of other colors. He put pots of petunias and geraniums near the pool. The bright hot pinks and purples were dangerous. They did something to that blue.

The stone was easy. Almost too blandly easy. He could paint chalky white and creamy sand and cool gray and paradoxical hot gray; he could understand the shadows in the high rough wall of enormous cobblestones that bounded his land.

The problem was the sky. Swimming in one direction, he was headed toward a great rounded green mountain, thick

with the bright yellow-green of dense chestnut trees, making a slightly innocent, simple arc against the sky. Whereas the other way, he swam toward crags, toward a bowl of bald crags, with a few pines and lines of dark shale. And against the green hump the blue sky was one blue, and against the bald stone another, even when for a brief few hours it was uniformly blue overhead, that rich blue, that cobalt deepwashed blue of the South, which fought all the blues of the pool, all the green-tinged, duck-egg-tinged blues of the shifting water. But the sky had also its greenish days, and its powdery-haze days, and its theatrical threatening days, and none of these blues and whites and golds and ultramarines and faded washes harmonized in any way with the pool blues, though they all went through their changes and splendors in the same world, in which he and his shadow swam, in which he and his shadow stood in the sun and struggled to record them.

He muttered to himself. Why bother? Why does this *matter* so much? *What difference does it make to anything if I solve this blue* and just start again? I could just sit down and drink wine. I could go and be useful in a cholera camp in Ethiopia. *Why bother to render the transparency in solid paint or air on a bit of board?* I could just stop.

He could not.

HE tried oil paint and acrylic, watercolor and gouache, large designs and small plain planes and complicated juxtaposed planes. He tried trapping light on impasto and tried also glazing his surfaces flat and glossy, like seventeenth-century Dutch or Spanish paintings of silk. One of these almost pleased him—done at night, with the lights under the water and the dark round the stone, on an oval bit of board. But then he thought it was sentimental. He tried veils of watery blues on white in watercolor; he tried Matisse-like patches of blue and petunia (pool blue, sky blue, petunia); he tried Bonnard's mixtures of pastel and gouache.

His brain hurt, and his eyes stared, and he felt whipped by winds and dried by suns.

He was happy, in one of the ways human beings have found in which to be happy.

ONE day he got up as usual, and as usual flung himself naked into the water to watch the dawn in the sky and the blue come out of the black and gray in the water.

There was a hissing in his ears, and a stench in his nostrils—perhaps a sulfurous stench, he was not sure; his eyes were sharp, but his profession, with spirits and turpentine, had dulled his nostrils. As he moved through the sluggish surface, he stirred up bubbles, which broke, foamed, frothed, and crusted. He began to leave a trail of white, which reminded him of polluted rivers, of the waste pipes of tanneries, of deserted mines. He came out rapidly and showered. He sent a fax to the Jardinerie Emeraude. "What was Paradise is be-

come the Infernal Pit. Where once I smelled lavender and salt, now I have a mephitic stench. What have you done to my water? Undo it, undo it. I cannot co-exist with these exhalations." His French was more florid than his English. "I am polluted, my work is polluted, *I cannot go on.*" How could the two young men be brought to recognize the extent of the insult? He paced the terrace like an angry panther. The sickly smell crept like marsh gas over the flowerpots, through the lavender bushes. An emerald-green van drew up, with a painted swimming pool and a painted palm tree. Every time he saw the van, he was pleased and irritated that this commercial emerald-and-blue had found an exact balance for the difficult aquamarine without admitting any difficulty.

The young men ran along the edge of the pool, peering in, their muscular legs brown under their shorts, their plimsolls padding. The sun came up over the green hill and showed the plague-stricken water skin, ashy and suppurating. It is all okay, said the young man, this is a product we put in to fight algae, not because you *have* algae, M. Bernard, but in case algae might appear, as a precaution. It will all be exhaled in a week or two; the mousse will go; the water will clear.

"Empty the pool," Bernard said. "Now. Empty it now. I will not co-exist for two weeks with this vapor. Give me back my clean salty water. *This water is my lifework.* Empty it now."

"It will take days to fill," one young man said, with a French acceptance of Bernard's desperation. "Also there is the question of the allocation of water, of how much you are permitted to take."

"We could fetch it up from the river," the other said. In French this is, literally, we could draw it *in* the river, *puiser dans le ruisseau*, like fishing. "It will be cold, ice-cold from the source, up the mountain," said the Emeraude young men.

"Do it," Bernard said. "Fill it from the river. I am an Englishman. I swim in the North Sea, I like cold water. Do it. Now."

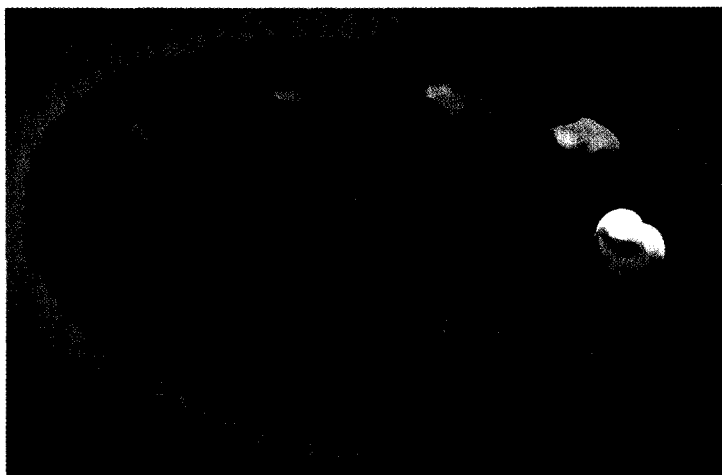
The young men ran up and down. They turned huge taps in the gray-plastic pipes that debouched from the side of the mountain. The swimming pool souged and sighed and began, still sighing, to sink, while down below, on the hillside, a frothing flood spread and laughed and pranced and curled and divided and swept into the river. Bernard stalked behind the young men, admonishing them. "Look at the froth. We are polluting the river."

"It is only two liters. It is perfectly safe. Everyone has it in

his pool, M. Bernard. It is tried and tested; it is a product for *purifying water.*" Only you, his pleasant voice implied, are pigheaded enough to insist on voiding it.

The pool became a pit. The mosaic sparkled a little in the sun, but it was a sad sight. It was a deep blue pit of an entirely unproblematic dull texture. Almost like a bathroom floor. The dolphin lost his movement and his fire and his curvetting ripples, and became a stolid fish in two dimensions. Bernard peered in from the deep end and from the shallow end, and looked over the terrace wall at the hillside, where froth was expiring on nettles and brambles. The pool took almost all day to empty and began to make sounds like a gigantic version of the bath-plug terrors of Bernard's infant dreams.

The two young men appeared carrying an immense boa constrictor of heavy black-plastic pipe and an implement that looked like a torpedo, or a diver's oxygen pack. The mountainside was steep, and the river ran green and chuckling at its foot. Bernard stood and watched. The coil of pipe was uncoiled, the electricity was connected in his humming pump house, and a strange sound began, a regular boom-boom, like the beat of a giant heart, echoing off the green mountain. Water began



to gush from the mouth of the pipe lying in the sad, dry depths of his pool-pit. Where it trickled upward, the mosaic took on a little life again, like crystals glinting.

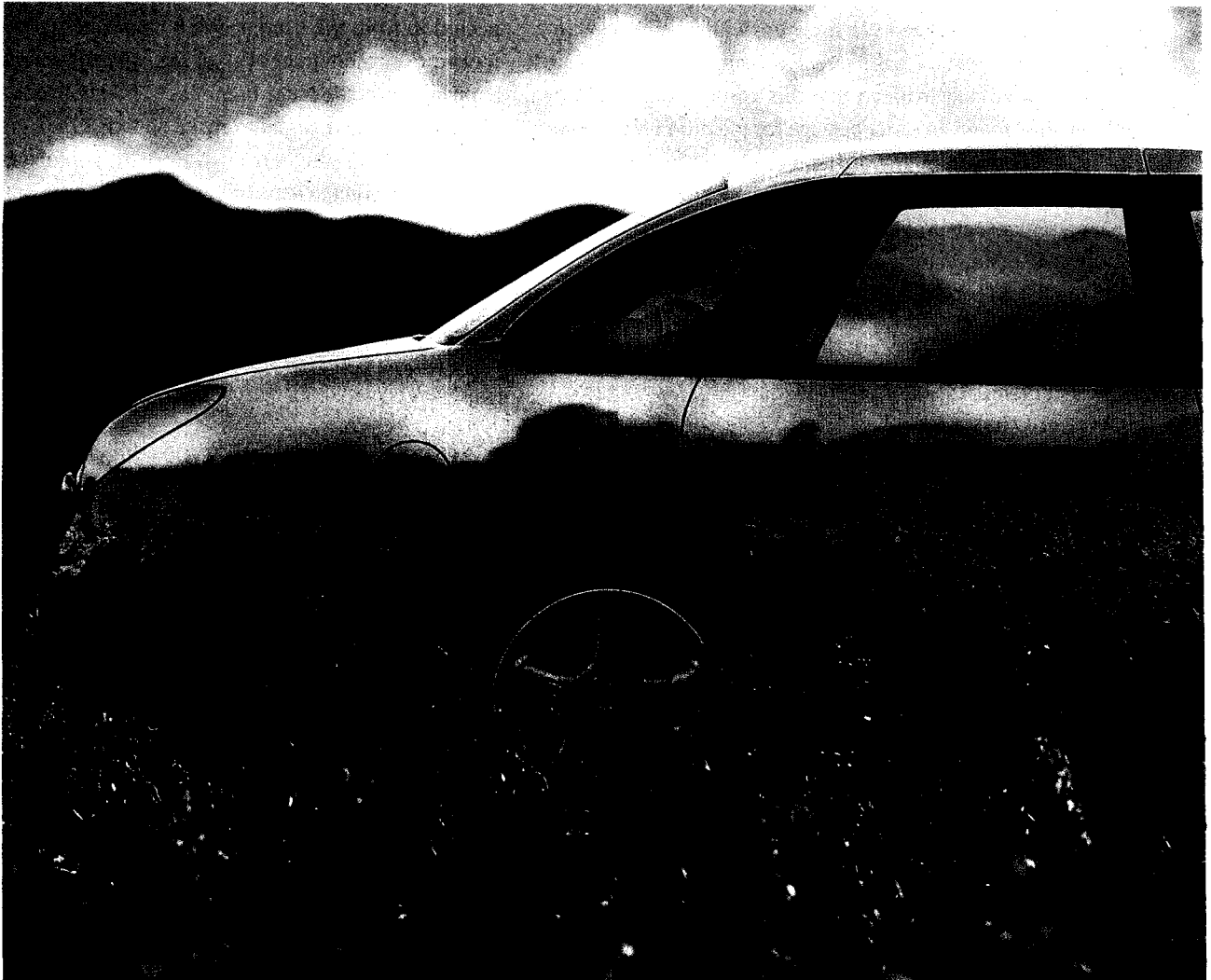
"It will take all night to fill," the young men said. "But do not be afraid: even if the pool overflows, water will not come in your house; the slope is too steep, and it will run away back to the river. And tomorrow we will come and regulate it and filter it and you may swim. But it will be very cold."

"*Tant pis,*" Bernard said.



ALL night the black tube on the hillside wailed like a monstrous bullfrog, boom-boom, boom-boom. All night the water rose, silent and powerful. Bernard could not sleep; he paced his terrace and watched the silver line creep up the sides of the pit, watched the greenish water sway. Finally he slept, and in the morning his world was awash with river water, and the heartbeat machine was still howling on the riverbank, boom-boom, boom-boom. He watched a small fish skid and slide across his terrace, flow over the edge, and slip in a stream of water down the hillside and back into the river. Everything smelled wet and lively, with no hint of sulfur and no clear smell of purified water. His

SEEMS OUR MOST ORIGINAL



Bluer sky, greener grass, cleaner air. These are elements we see in the vehicles we're developing at FORD MOTOR COMPANY. Like the Synthesis 2010. A car whose body is 100% RECYCLABLE, thanks to its light-weight ALL ALUMINUM shell. Which is just as strong as steel, yet gentler on the gas pump. So it's safer for the ENVIRONMENT. Today, Ford is the auto industry leader in aluminum fabrication. As well as an innovator in the application of recycled plastics. It's all part of our continuing effort to

the Americans' specific part in it. The United States is just one slice of Mexican history, whereas the idea of history cuts across every segment of Mexican political and cultural life: its literature and archaeology, its education and art, its identity or lack of identity. If the American dream is the archetypal bond in the United States, the Mexican memory unites Mexico. Without it the country as we know it might simply not exist.

Again, the Chiapas episode neatly illustrates the weight of history. The peasants and organizers in Chiapas rose up in arms under the banner of possibly the most revered hero of the Mexican Revolution—Emiliano Zapata, a visionary village leader from the central state of Morelos. As every Marlon Brando fan knows, Zapata was betrayed and assassinated in the hacienda of Chinameca, on the orders of his revolutionary rival and President, Venustiano Carranza. In a country where treason abounds and loyalties are short-lived, the sensitivity to betrayal is always high. It rose to a boiling point a few days after the Chiapas rebellion exploded, as President Salinas de Gortari, either out of insensitivity or with deliberate symbolism, issued his proclamation of amnesty for the Chiapas insurgents in the Carranza Room of the presidential palace. He addressed the nation with a portrait of the white-haired, bearded co-author of Mexico's constitution behind him. Zapata's self-styled heirs were being forgiven under the watchful gaze of the idol's murderer—a message not particularly comforting or subliminal. The rebels' leader, Subcomandante Marcos, promptly stated his mistrust of Salinas's amnesty, and pundits and historians seized on the historical irony. Was the Carranza-sponsored amnesty for the Zapatistas a replay of the tragedy at Chinameca? Another, deeper question was less insistently asked: Where else besides Mexico could such a discussion of the value and relevance of historical symbols take place, and what meaning did it hold for Mexican modernity? How was it that a name like Zapata continued to possess such a grip on Mexicans' memories and motivation for struggle and sacrifice?

One answer is that the recourse to history as an instrument of political debate and contention, and the need to refer to it constantly for electoral or insurrectional purposes, is in all likelihood a deeply ingrained, possibly permanent feature of Mexican life. Like the perception of time, it is not a lagging indicator, not ballast from Mexico's pre-modern past that must and will be shed as the country ventures forth into modernity.

INEQUALITY, time, history, are not soluble in water or free trade. The true test of partnership lies in acknowledging and mastering differences, without pretending that they are either subsidiary or passing. The ones addressed here are neither: they are essential, and lasting.

From 1940 to 1980 the Mexican economy grew at an average rate of about seven percent a year; that is largely how the existing middle class was created. It will take at least

that many years, with similar rates of growth, or twice as long at half the pace, to expand that middle class to the magnitude it has in the United States. Mexico's social configuration will begin to look like the United States' sometime in the middle of the next century, if all goes well. We in Mexico will live on "Mexican time" at least until then, and probably until much later. Were this a problem standing in the way of a better and closer relationship, it would have no solution—a terribly un-American difficulty. But it is just a reality—one in whose joys and promise Mexicans and Americans, along with those millions that are both, should all revel and indulge.

Similarly, Mexico will continue to surprise Americans, as it should. All the more reason, perhaps, to heed warnings when they do surface, to avoid surprises when future events are fully forecast. The aftermath of Mexico's current economic debacle is obviously one such occasion, and one particular call of alarm should be listened to.

Washington rashly imposed on President Zedillo conditions for its economic assistance that few other nations in the world would have accepted, much less nations as proud and independent as Mexico once was. Those conditions will worsen what is already the most drastic recession and the most serious aggravation of social tensions in Mexico in decades. During the NAFTA debate and at the height of his credibility in the United States, Carlos Salinas argued that failure to ratify the treaty would bring about an economic collapse in Mexico, which in turn would bring about a wave of undocumented immigration to the north. The economic collapse came anyway, but the wave looks more like a steadily rising tide. Were the Clinton Administration, in its obsession with re-election politics, to try to stem that tide, it would threaten the only true deterrent to the proverbial wave: Mexican stability. Any attempt to clamp down on immigration from the south—by sealing the border militarily, by forcing Mexico to deter its citizens from emigrating, or through some federal version of California's Proposition 187—will make social peace in the barrios and pueblos of Mexico untenable.

The United States has traditionally made the right choice between what it considers two connected evils: Mexican instability and Mexican immigration. It fears both but clearly prefers the latter, knowing that the former would only worsen matters. Indeed, immigration has not been a problem in binational relations but, rather, has been part of the solution to other, graver problems. Some Americans—undoubtedly more than before—dislike immigration, but there is very little they can do about it, and the consequences of trying to stop immigration would also certainly be more pernicious than any conceivable advantage. The United States should count its blessings: it has dodged instability on its borders since the Mexican Revolution, now nearly a century ago. The warnings from Mexico are loud and clear; this time it might be a good idea to heed them. ☸

pressed, highly intense events. From the great pre-Columbian civilizations to the conquest there is perceived continuity; from the conquest to independence is a 300-year period of apparent colonial continuity; from independence through the U.S.–Mexican War, la Reforma, and the French intervention, on to the Porfiriato and up to the Revolution is an additional century of nation-building continuity; from the Revolution through the oil expropriation and the student movement of 1968 and all the way to the current crisis is the continuity of “the system.” The bursts of events become more frequent, perhaps more intense, but still, long-term continuity reigns supreme.

In this conception of history, what little change there is acquires inordinate importance. Each cluster of events becomes crucial. The rest of the time not much occurs, but whatever does is overloaded with meaning and import for the future. Although the different significance attached to history has often been emphasized—leading to the cliché that Mexicans are obsessed with history, Americans with the future—the deep gap it opens between two nations and cultures makes it far more than a matter of temperament. For the United States, history is folklore plus the recent past; for Mexico it is the essence of the present.

There are many good reasons for this difference. To begin with, history has played different roles in nation-building in the two countries. In the United States, the quintessential country of immigrants, history has barely served to forge the ties that bind a nation together, because the past is not common to successive waves of immigrants. Many other factors fill the void that history leaves: the rule of law, the frontier, an ideological attachment to a unique form of government, and so forth. Mexico, on the other hand (a country whose only large-scale immigration was the Spanish conquest and 300-year colonization), to the (dubious) extent that it is a fully consummated nation, is so because of a common origin, from which everything else stems: territory, *la raza*, language, religion. These all date back to the conquest, and to the succes-

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BY A MODERNIZING
MEXICAN LEADER
AND AN APPARENTLY
ACQUIESCENT
POPULATION.**

sive episodes of Mexico’s subsequent transformation: independence, the reform and Juárez, the Revolution. In a country as deeply divided as Mexico, as segregated socially and as splintered regionally and ethnically, one of the few unifying themes is precisely, though paradoxically, a shared history, even if an official version of it has to be invented in order for its study and reading to be common to all.

This is why debates over school history texts, historical figures, favorite periods, and past moments of national shame are so impassioned. The way history is taught, read, and written is a fundamental part of political debates, of ideological discourse, and even of policy options. The two national debates that took place in 1992 and 1993 over the rewriting of the nation’s elementary school history manuals were revealing and foreseeable, though they obviously surprised the government of President Salinas. It was not just the textbook that was being rewritten, of course; the country’s entire history underwent an excruciating revision. Political pas-

sions and nationalist emotions were unexpectedly ignited by seemingly arcane or obsolete discussions of the colonial period; of the way in which Mexico lost more than half its territory to the United States; of what was or was not a balanced assessment of the Porfiriato period of foreign-dominated, authoritarian, but undeniable economic development at the turn of the century; of the 1968 student massacre in Tlatelolco and the final verdict on the administrations of Presidents Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo. The surprise this time was all the greater because the outburst of national introspection occurred at a time when it seemed that Mexico had, as many American commentators surmised, put its demons and obsessions behind it. But these are not demons or obsessions: they are among the few strings that tie an unfinished and polarized nation together.

Mexicans harp on past tensions and conflicts with the United States not because of anti-Americanism but because of the significance of history. It’s the history that counts, not

plex reasons as well, time in Mexico is not what it is in the United States. Time divides our two countries as much as any other single factor.

One of the most obvious implications of this difference—which actually pertains to much of Latin America, particularly those nations with a strong pre-Columbian heritage—is that immediate responses, rapid cause-and-effect sequences, are

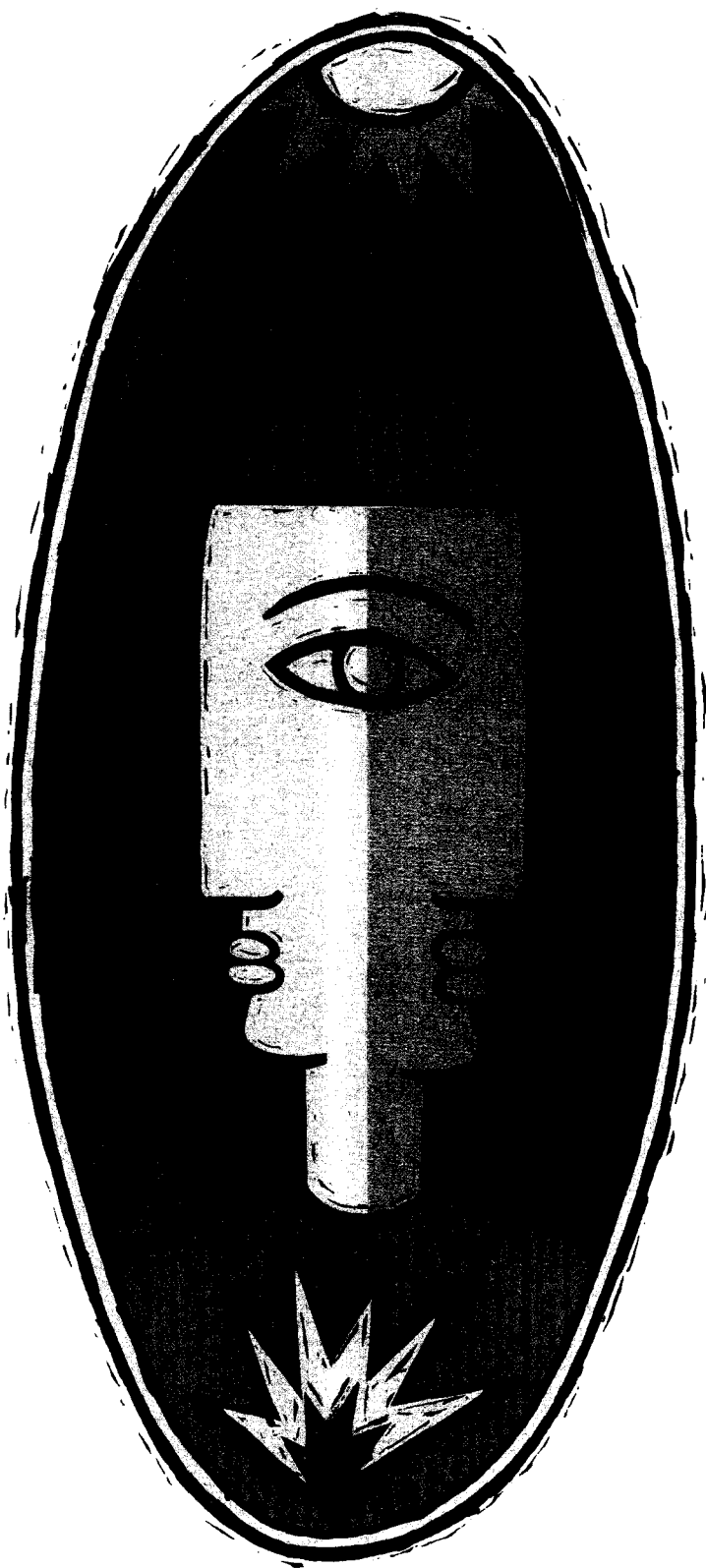
rare. Time lags, delayed reactions, an often incomprehensible patience, tend to be much more common. Quick causes are not always matched by equally quick effects. On many occasions the effect is simply slow in coming: it will happen, in time.

This expression of the difference is somewhat unsettling to foreigners, especially Americans. When “nothing happens” in Mexico right after a particular event, such as recog-

nition of the Church by the State, the decision to enter into a free-trade agreement with the United States, the privatization of the traditional *ejido* land-tenure system, an armed uprising in the countryside, the assassination of a presidential candidate, the stealing of an election, or the advent of an economic crisis, external observers or students of Mexico often tend to assume that “nothing” will continue to happen. But the time lag between cause and effect is simply greater than outsiders expect. The Chiapas rebellion, to review a recent example, was largely motivated by a convergent series of trends in the making for several years in Mexico: the fall in world prices for coffee (the main crop in the Chiapas highlands), the dismantling of the old price-support system, the consciousness-raising effort carried out by priests and lay workers in the area, the organizational work undertaken by agrarian semi-Maoist activists from the north, the eviction of indigenous communities from their land by cattle grazers and timber companies. None of these trends was recent; they were all set in motion some time ago. Why they came together on January 1, 1994, is anybody’s guess, even if the Zapatistas said that the date was chosen to reflect their disapproval of NAFTA, which went into effect on the first of the year. The absence of any perceptible reaction to those trends before that date did not mean that they were not operating. It just took time for them to come to fruition.

History

THE third difference between Mexico and the United States is directly related to the question of time: the role and weight of history in the two cultures. One of the reasons that time so divides Mexico and the United States is that on a broader scale it seems to be more nearly immobile south of the border. Historical time is slower; fewer blips appear on the historical screen; permanence and immobility, much more than change, are perceived as the main features. Mexican history appears to be one long continuum, with great and long constants and underlying continuities, and only sporadic bursts of com-



work *The Age of Time*: Carlos Fuentes's obsession with time, by his own admission, fills half his narrative creation.

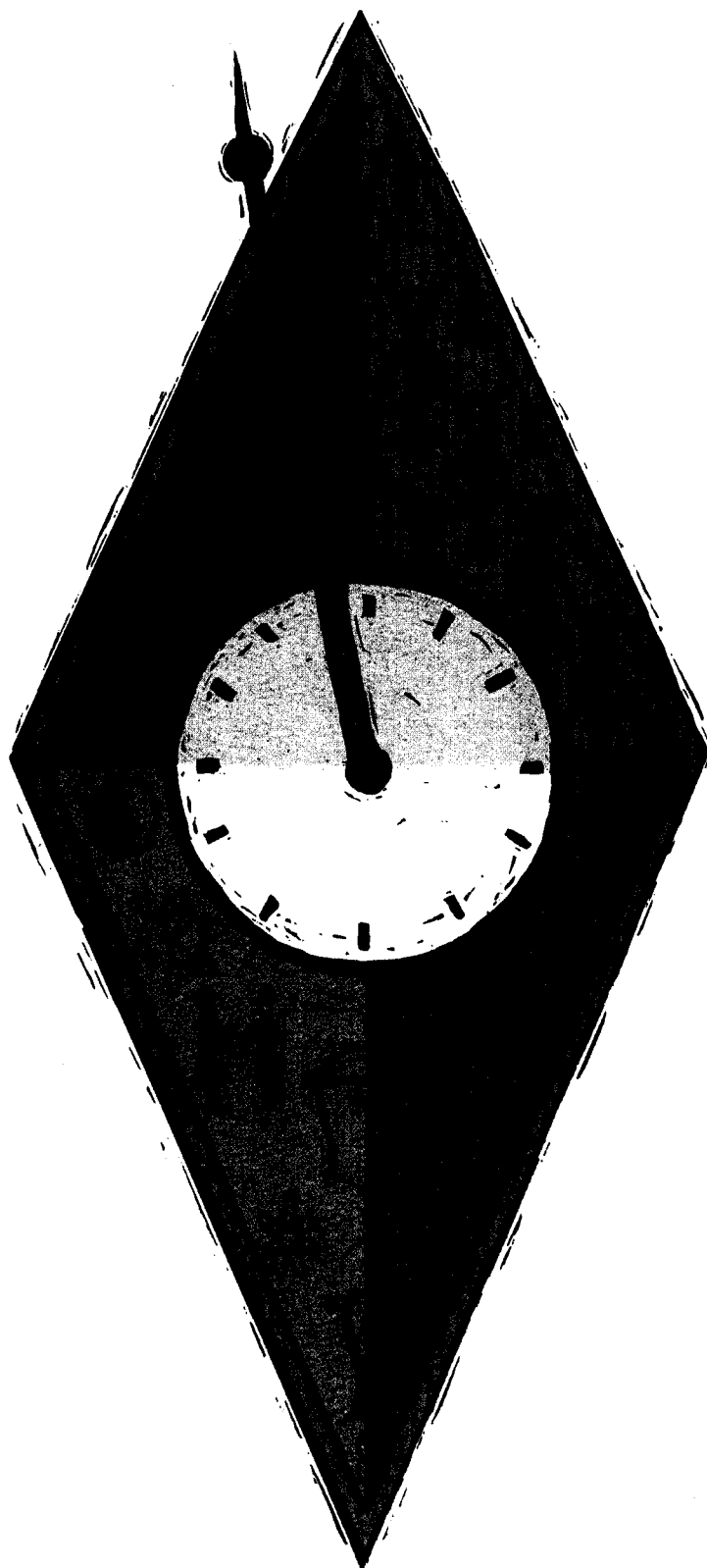
The difference is not merely a question of punctuality, formality, or responsibility but rather one of the conception of time, its role in life, and its social function. The expression of the difference can undoubtedly be found in the stereotypes: Mexicans are, in most of the country, less punctual, quick, and hurried than Americans (or Germans or Britons, for that matter). But to reduce deep differences in culture and tradition to one of their most obvious manifestations is to miss an essential characteristic of Mexican life and customs. Furthermore, time is not just a question of time. Mexico's definition of time is not "pre-modern" and soon to be "modern."

Mexicans are not "still" plagued by a lack of attachment to time; they are simply different. Nor is the difference inexplicable or mysterious; it has its explanations and origins. The nonexistence of a mass society in Mexico begins to explain it. Because of the abysses separating different sectors of Mexican society, in Mexico people can behave differently from one another, according to varying sets of rules.

Millions of Mexicans consume, work, rest, and drive the same way, of course, but many more do not. Some Mexicans attach great importance to time; others may choose to act differently, without prejudice to themselves. Certain Mexicans can subscribe to a series of rules, from traffic regulations to work discipline and punctuality; others can decide, consciously or otherwise, that they prefer not to. The absence of an authentic mass society allows for these mass exceptions.

There is a sociological explanation too. Because so many Mexicans work, live, and even love informally, time is not of the essence. Letting and watching time go by, being late (an hour, a day, a week), are not grievous offenses. They simply indicate a lower rung on the ladder of priorities. It is more important to see a friend or the family than to keep an appointment or make it to work, especially when work consists of hawking wares on street corners. An economic explanation is also available: there is a severe lack of incentives for being on time, delivering on time, or working overtime. Since most people are paid little for what they do, the prize for punctuality and formality can be meaningless: time is often *not* money in Mexico. The choice between making a few pesos more and having a good time is easy and as rational as any other. Everything is slow in Mexico, but not because

Mexicans cannot do things quickly. Everything is slow because the passage of time is not very noticeable. Time is flat: too frequently nothing changes with time, and the sense of its going by—the reason for putting a premium on it—is absent. Much of Mexico lacks seasons except when it rains and when it doesn't, and in the countryside the dry season is basically devoted to waiting for rain; for this and more-com-



equality, they undercut a strong argument, inequality, by focusing on an inaccurate one: abject, generalized poverty. Alexander von Humboldt, the German writer and traveler, and perhaps the world's first Latin Americanist, made the point as early as 1802: "Mexico is the country of inequality," he wrote. "Perhaps nowhere in the world is there a more horrendous distribution of wealth, civilization, cultivation of land and population." Foreign writers from B. Traven to Ambrose Bierce, photographers, anthropologists, and observers from all walks of life have reached the same conclusion over the years. The contrast between rich and poor in Mexico and the extremes reached by both are rarely seen elsewhere.

According to the 1994 *Forbes* portrait of the world's wealthiest individuals, after the United States, Germany, and Japan, the country with the largest number of people on the list was Mexico; that number jumped from two to twenty-four during the Salinas reign. Their declared fortunes combined would represent almost 10 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product for a year—not that anyone wishes to confiscate their wealth or believes that confiscation would serve any purpose. Yet outside city limits, or where the broad avenues and glittering stores within the cities end—San Bernabé in Monterrey, or just behind the Mexico City airport—tens or hundreds of thousands of people live in squalor, with no running water or sewer lines and only rudimentary electricity.

El México Profundo

BUT the inequality is not simply economic; it is also social. A government undersecretary (one level down from the top echelon of public service) earned in 1994 (prior to devaluation) approximately \$180,000 after taxes, excluding health insurance and perquisites but including all sorts of bonuses, premiums, and expense accounts—almost twice what his U.S. counterpart earned *before* taxes. His chauffeur (provided by the government, of course) made about \$7,500 a year. The official addresses the employee with the familiar "tú," while the latter must speak to the former with the respectful "usted." The official and his peers in the business and intellectual elites of the nation tend to be white (there are exceptions, but they are becoming scarcer), well educated, and well traveled abroad. They send their two children to private schools, removed from the world of the employee. The employee and his peers tend to be *mestizo*, many are barely literate, and they have four or five children, most of whom will be able to attend school only through the fifth grade.

Certain equalizing institutions that reduced injustice and segregation in the United States for many years, before they ran into nationwide resistance, have never really existed in Mexico. Nominally there is a draft; in fact no son of even a middle-class family will ever be forced to comply with the draft. The public school system did play a certain equalizing

role in the past, and still does to an extent. Every President of Mexico to date has attended public schools and the National Autonomous University of Mexico or the Polytechnical Institute. But odds are that no children of sitting Cabinet members, leading businessmen, opinion-makers, artists, or civil servants are enrolled in a public institution below the university level. The decades after the revolution—through the 1950s, perhaps—provided some upward mobility, some mingling, certainly the advent of a new business elite and a middle class. But the impetus was soon lost. By the 1980s Mexico was once again a country of three nations: the *criollo* minority of elites and the upper middle class, living in style and affluence; the huge, poor *mestizo* majority; and the utterly destitute minority of what in colonial times was called the Republic of Indians—the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Michoacán, Guerrero, Puebla, Chihuahua, and Sonora, all known today as *el México profundo*: the deep Mexico.

These divisions explain in part why Mexico is as violent and unruly, as surprising and unfathomable, as it has always prided itself on being. It is a nation stricken by violence from birth. The pervasiveness of the violence was obfuscated for years by the fact that much of it was directed by the state and the elites against society and the masses, not the other way around. The current rash of violence by society against the state and the elites is not a new trend. It is simply a retargeting.

And Mexico is unpredictable. Reportedly, the dictator Porfirio Díaz remarked, as he sailed for exile in France in 1911, "In Mexico nothing ever happens until it happens." The country erupts sporadically and regionally because the inequities from which it suffers become at some point intolerable—worse than any conceivable consequence of attempting to redress them, by whatever means. But the very inequality and segregation from which those eruptions spring make it impossible to foresee them. Mexican politicians, establishment intellectuals, and businessmen were too estranged from the indigenous peoples of Chiapas early last year, from university students in 1968, and from the peasants in Morelos in 1910 to sense when tolerance had been stretched too far. The "leading indicators" available to scholars, pundits, and technocrats in the United States and elsewhere do not operate in Mexico.

Time

A SECOND, cultural difference often drives Americans and other foreigners in Mexico to distraction, largely because they refuse to admit its existence. It has to do with time: stereotypically and arrogantly it's called the *mañana* syndrome, or, as the T-shirts have it, I'M ON MEXICAN TIME. As Octavio Paz wrote in his memorable "Reflections: Mexico and the United States," published in *The New Yorker* in 1979, the two societies differ dramatically in their position as regards time. And it is no coincidence that Mexico's greatest living novelist has titled the sum of his life's

the United States, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The mistake that many outside Mexico made was to believe that the highly perceptible differences of the past were superficial enough to be swept away by a modernizing leader and an apparently acquiescent population. The mistake that many inside Mexico made was to persuade themselves (ourselves) that those differences would surface automatically, almost immediately, and work their magic directly in the streets and villages and at the polls. From abroad, the absence of reaction to change was interpreted as support—enthusiastic at best, resigned at worst. Domestically, opposition was reduced to waiting for the children of Sánchez to rise up in arms or protest over the destruction of their myths, if not their world. Both views missed the point: the Mexican difference is everything a difference should be—no more, no less. This essay explores that difference.

Inequality

THE onslaught of events in Mexico since New Year's Day, 1994, when the peasants of Chiapas took the city of San Cristóbal and CNN by storm, must have surprised the authors of *Newsweek International's* 1993 year-end "Conventional Wisdom Watch" section, who had enthusiastically hailed Mexico's NAFTA-inspired transformation into a U.S. "sunbelt state." But a guerrilla uprising, a successful conspiracy to assassinate the ruling party's presidential candidate and, subsequently, its Secretary General, the jailing of a vaunted President's brother, the same President's exile, and the complete collapse of an economy supposedly on the verge of an Asian-style boom were not exactly what one would expect in Arizona.

Journalists, anthropologists, historians, and writers over the years have, of course, attempted to explain the origins of these and other surprises by pointing to differences in background, religion, history, economic development, language, and ethnic origin. All are valid. But these differences were supposedly overshadowed in recent times by a presumed commonality of purpose, enlightenment, and economic doctrine. The advent of a "modern" Mexico—business-oriented, outward-looking, and sympathetic to most things American—blurred the contours of a different Mexico: one that, despite the convergence of ideas among the elites of both nations, remained profoundly different from the United States, and capable of generating the very surprises that have cropped up in the past couple of years.

Three essential divergences come to mind, which contribute as much as any other factors to our being two different peoples and cultures. One is economic and social; the other two are cultural.

First, the United States is fundamentally a middle-class society, in which, although inequalities have undoubtedly sharpened over the past decade or two (making it, as a recent *New York Times* article explained, the most unequal of all in-

dustrialized societies), 64 percent of households received what many consider to be a middle-class income in 1993. Mexican statistics tend to be unreliable—but Mexico appears to be something quite distinct. Although great progress was achieved from 1940 to 1980 in building a middle class, Mexico is still (recent data indicate more than ever) a polarized society, with enormous gaps between rich and poor, town and country, north and south, white and brown (or *criollos* and *mestizos*).

There is, of course, a middle class in Mexico, but it constitutes a minority of the population: somewhere between a quarter and a third. The majority—poor, urban, brown, and often without access to the main attributes of modern life in the United States and other industrialized countries (public education, decent health care and housing, formal employment, social security, the right to vote and serve in government, jury duty, and so forth)—mingles with itself. It lives, works, sleeps, and worships apart from a small group of the very wealthy and a larger but still restricted middle class. The United States is the proverbial mass society (though less so than formerly), in which a white, middle-class, suburban majority coexists with various minorities that are undeniably though unevenly segregated and discriminated against. Mexico is a society terribly riven by class, race, gender, age, region, and future, in which a middle- and upper-class minority segregates and discriminates against the vast majority of the population. It is one of the most unequal societies around, though not one of the poorest. Nonetheless, it is poor: in 1992 nearly 65 percent of wage earners received up to but not more than twice the minimum wage—at the time, around \$100 a month. According to a more recent estimate, 55.8 percent of all Mexican households have a yearly purchasing power of less than about \$5,000.

In 1992 the richest 10 percent of the population received 38 percent of the country's total income, and the poorest half only around 18 percent; the trend in recent decades has been worsening, not improving. Some countries are worse: in 1990 in Brazil the richest 10 percent received 53 percent of total income, and the poorest half only 10 percent. But India, not exactly the epitome of equality, has a much fairer structure, and in the United States the numbers are quite different from those in Mexico. Until the polarization of family incomes took hold in the Reagan years, the richest 10 percent in the United States received 31 percent of total income, while the poorest half received about 25 percent. Another contrast between the two societies can be found in the middle sectors. In the United States, even after the Reagan revolution had worked its shrinking effects on the middle class, the third, or middle, quintile received 15 percent of total income. In Mexico in 1992 it received only 12 percent.

Herein lay, probably, the greatest mistake made by NAFTA's opponents in the United States. By systematically emphasizing and sometimes exaggerating Mexico's poverty, which is real enough, and confusing it with Mexico's in-

of President Salinas's family were the talk of Mexico City from the outset of his administration, as were the growing influence and impunity of the nation's drug lords. The violence inherent in Mexican society, magnified by more than a decade of economic stagnation and several years of economic policies that resulted in a further concentration of income and wealth, was also pointed to by many, yet not acknowl-

edged by those with money to invest, axes to grind, or treaties to ratify. The woeful lack of political reform, and the autocratic fashion in which Carlos Salinas implemented his economic modernization program, were repeatedly underlined in Mexico, and even in the United States. But the link between politics and economic policy in the South was not seen by the North: the nonsimultaneity of *glasnost* and presumed *perestroika* in Mexico was lamented but not singled out as something that might lead to disaster. Alien as the idea might appear if it were introduced into the United States, enlightened despotism was deemed perfectly natural for Mexico: what a pity that Salinas, who was doing the right things, was doing them the wrong way. The very notion that it might not be possible to pursue this self-contradictory course indefinitely was rarely considered, let alone identified as a source of major trouble to come.

What made Mexico once again so opaque to the beholder from abroad? What rendered the foreign—mainly American—*regard* so distorted, so blind, so mistaken? Clearly, the answer must highlight the incestuous relationship that soon developed among brokerage firms and investment banks peddling Mexican paper, self-styled experts on Mexico advising those financial institutions, and Bush and Clinton Administration officials who sought to avoid at all costs embarrassing or weakening their newfound friends in the Salinas regime, particularly when the latter embarked upon the NAFTA adventure. Even correspondents for the U.S. press in Mexico fell for Salinas's charm and urbanity, and for their editors' discreet but persistent suggestions that Mexico's modernization be reported on "fairly." And undoubtedly, as Carlos Fuentes has written, the idea of incorporating Mexico fully into the U.S. economic sphere at a bargain-basement cost proved an irresistible temptation for both a Republican and a Democratic Administration. Enhancing that temptation was the laissez-faire ideology sweeping both parties, with its thought-paralyzing mantra of "free trade." Everyone had a stake in Mexico's succeeding in its effort to achieve what "everyone" wanted: a more market-oriented, more pro-American, more compliant, and, if possible, more democratic Mexico.

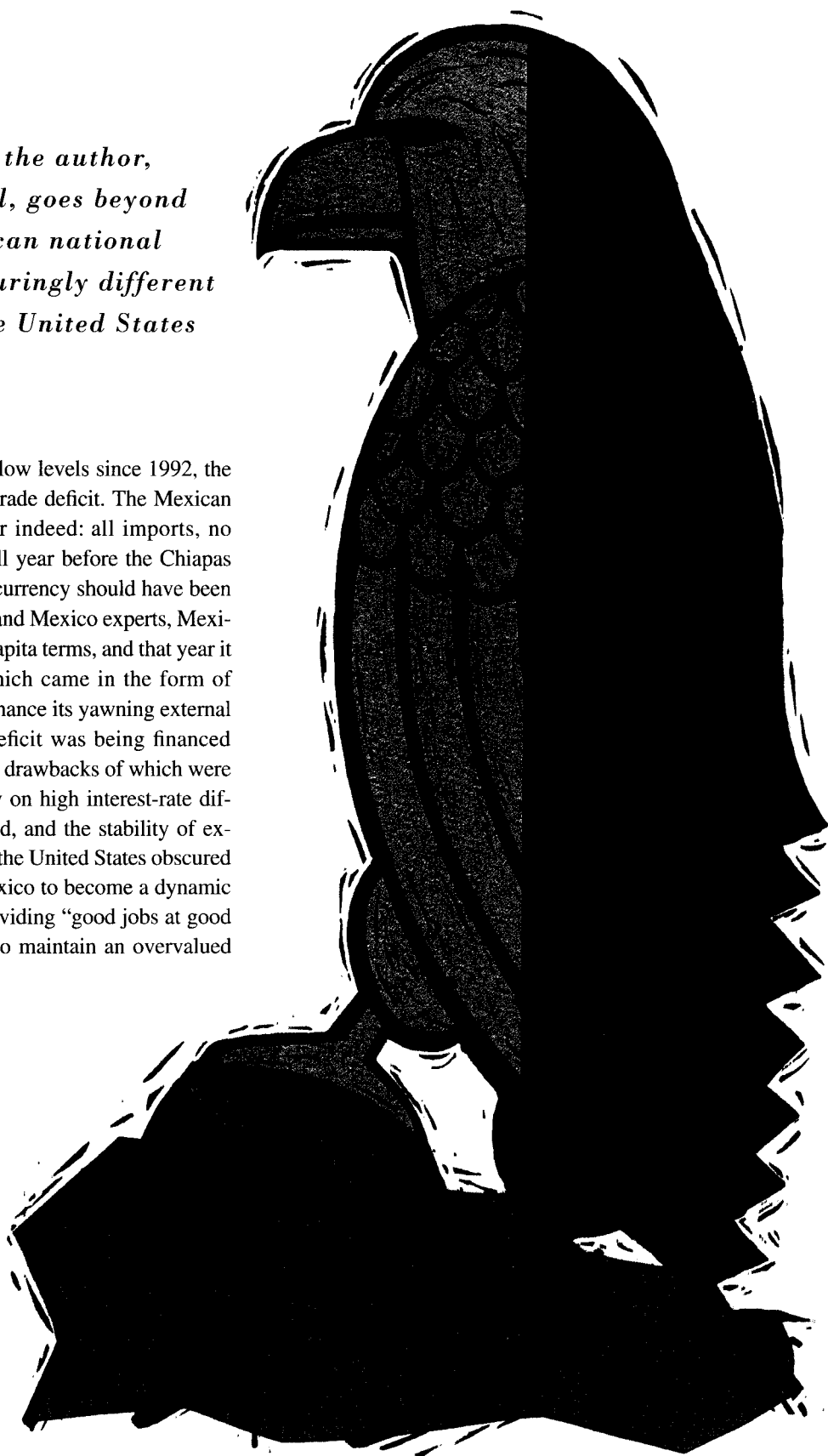
But this explanation, while necessary, is obviously not sufficient. As so often in the past, a deeper series of factors made Mexico mysterious, even to the most trained or sympathetic eye. The key to that series, the single element that explains the opacity of Mexican society and politics to so many, is the simple but critical fact that Mexico is radically, substantively, ferociously different from

Differences

The reason, writes the author, a Mexican intellectual, goes beyond finance to the Mexican national character and how enduringly different the country is from the United States

With growth at disappointingly low levels since 1992, the economy began to run up a huge trade deficit. The Mexican “economic miracle” was singular indeed: all imports, no growth. By the start of 1993, a full year before the Chiapas uprising, at the moment when the currency should have been devalued according to economists and Mexico experts, Mexico was growing negatively in per capita terms, and that year it required \$22 billion, much of which came in the form of short-term speculative capital, to finance its yawning external gap. From the outset this huge deficit was being financed chiefly by portfolio investment, the drawbacks of which were self-evident: volatility, dependency on high interest-rate differentials with the rest of the world, and the stability of exchange rates. The NAFTA debate in the United States obscured a crucial trade-off: in order for Mexico to become a dynamic market for American exports—providing “good jobs at good wages” for U.S. workers—it had to maintain an overvalued currency that would eventually drive Mexican firms out of business and Mexican workers out of *their* jobs. All of this was calculated, said, and denounced by countless Mexican and Latin American economists and pundits; it was simply ignored north of the border, except by a few critics of the Bush, Salinas, and Clinton governments whose views were dismissed as partisan, resentful, or simply out to lunch.

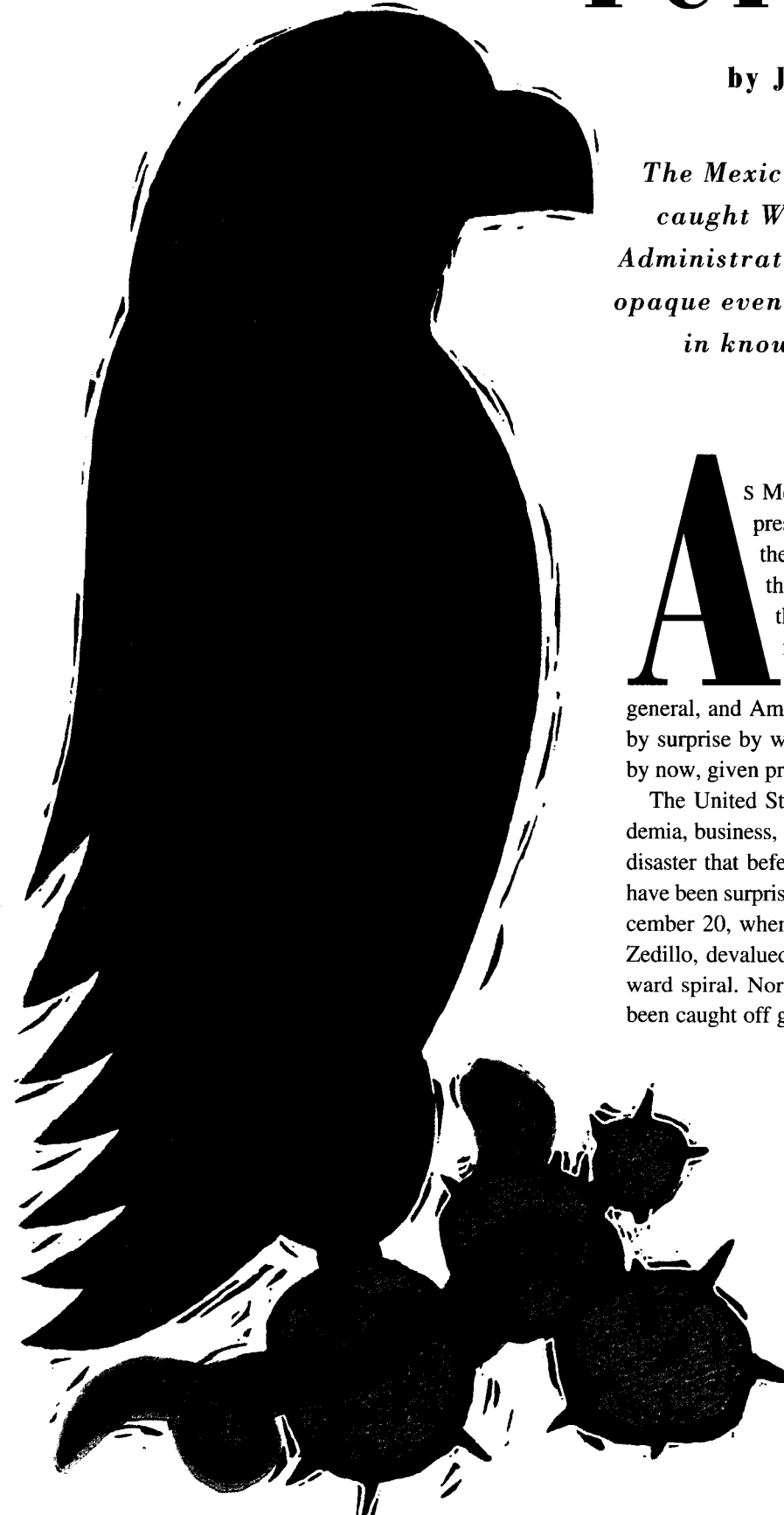
Nor were the telltale signs of corruption and abuse noticed. The dubious activities



Ferocious

by JORGE G. CASTAÑEDA

The Mexican devaluation apparently caught Wall Street and the Clinton Administration by surprise—Mexico was opaque even to experts with a huge stake in knowing what was going on.



AS Mexico sinks into economic and social depression, it may be time to dwell on some of the lessons of this new Mexican meltdown—the fourth major debacle in Mexico in less than two decades—for the country itself and for its neighbors to the north. It may be worthwhile to wonder why foreigners in general, and Americans in particular, so often seem caught by surprise by what happens in Mexico: they should know by now, given proximity, import, and history.

The United States—meaning, essentially, the press, academia, business, and government—cannot be blamed for the disaster that befell Mexico late in 1994. But no one should have been surprised by the economic crisis that struck on December 20, when the newly inaugurated President, Ernesto Zedillo, devalued the currency and plunged it into a downward spiral. Nor should Wall Street and Washington have been caught off guard by the political and psychological turmoil springing from the revelations of corruption, abuses, and sheer delinquency in which the outgoing administration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had engaged. All that happened in the course of the first few months of this year was warned of, written about, and clearly visible early on in the Salinas years. But few opinion leaders in the United States saw the writing on the thick white walls that criss-cross Mexico City.



Catherine II of Russia and Denis Diderot

by NANCY CALDWELL SOREL

EIGHTEENTH-century Russia was a vast and barbarous land, and one thought twice about accepting an invitation to visit there. Sophia Augusta Fredericka, the fourteen-year-old princess of a minor German state, had done that in 1744. She traveled there by sleigh, changed her name and religion, married the Grand Duke, and usurped the throne. As Empress Catherine, she corresponded with, and issued invitations to, her beloved mentors, the French *philosophes*.

Denis Diderot always declined. He never strayed far from Paris, and for years had been immersed in his seventeen-volume *Encyclopédie*. But with that now complete, he was tempted to accept. Catherine had been generous: aware of his impoverished state, she had bought his library, allowed him to keep it, and appointed him librarian—on salary. He served as her art agent, too, forwarding works by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Raphael to the Hermitage. In St. Petersburg he could thank her in person, and also instruct this “Empress of the Enlightenment” in areas where he thought her delinquent.

Diderot’s arrival in the fall of 1773 coincided with the wedding of Catherine’s son. The Empress had hoped to impress the illustrious figures assembled with the success of her reign; regrettably, much of Russia was in rebellion. The court, however, was brilliant. At the masked ball where she and Diderot, in his philosopher’s black suit, first met, there was snickering at his attire, but Catherine was charmed. She scheduled daily sessions in her apartments.

There all formality was discarded; were they not *philosophes* together? The ensuing arguments were a refreshing change from the sycophancy of her courtiers, but in time Catherine tired of Diderot’s lectures on despotism and on serfdom, which she had no plans to abolish. His habit of referring to her as “my good woman” was unappreciated, not to mention the way he grasped her arm or rapped her thigh to emphasize a point. At last, desirous of returning to a less examined existence, she produced a brand-new English carriage for his homeward journey, and they parted while still friends.

She looked at Bernard with huge black eyes under long lashes.

"I wish you joy," Bernard said in Cévenol French, "of your immortal soul."

"Hey," Raymond said. "Don't flirt with my girl in foreign languages."

"I don't flirt," Bernard said. "I paint."

"And we'll be off after breakfast and leave you to your painting," Raymond said. "Won't we, my sweet darling? Melanie wants. . . Melanie hasn't got. . . she didn't exactly bring. . . you understand—all her clothes and things. We're going to go to Cannes and buy some real clothes. Melanie wants to see the film festival and the stars. You won't mind, old friend; you didn't want me in the first place. I don't want to interrupt your *painting*. *Chacun à sa boue*, as we used to say in the army; I know that much French."

Melanie held out her pretty, plump hands and turned them over and over with considerable satisfaction. They were pinkly pale and also ornamented with pearly nail varnish. She did not look at Raymond but simply twisted her head about with what could have been pleasure at his little sallies of physical affection, or could have been irritation. She did not speak. She smiled a little over her milk, like a satisfied cat, displaying two rows of sweet little pearly teeth between her glossy pink lips.

Raymond's packing did not take long. Melanie turned out to have one piece of luggage—a large green leather bag containing rattling coins, by the sound. Raymond saw her into the car like a princess, and came back to say good-bye to his friend.

"Have a good time," Bernard said. "Beware of philosophers."

"Where would I find any philosophers?" asked Raymond, who had done theater design at art school with Bernard and now designed sets for a successful children's TV program called *The A-Mazing Maze of Monsters*. "Philosophers are extinct. I think your wits are turning, old friend, with stomping around on your own. You need a girlfriend."

"I don't," Bernard said. "Have a good holiday."

"We're going to be married," Raymond said, looking surprised, as though he himself had not known this until he said it. The face of Melanie swam at the car window, the pearly teeth visible inside the soft lips, the dark eyes staring. "I must go," Raymond said. "Melanie's waiting."

I LEFT to himself, Bernard settled back into the bliss of solitude. He looked at his latest work and saw that it was good. Encouraged, he looked at his earlier work and saw that it, too, was good. All those blues, all those curious questions, all those almost answers. The only problem was where to go now. He walked up and down; he remembered

the philosopher and laughed. He got out his Keats. He reread the dreadful moment in *Lamia* when the bride vanished away under the coldly malevolent eye of the philosopher.

do not all charms fly

At the mere touch of cold philosophy?

There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:

We know her woof, her texture; she is given

In the dull catalogue of common things.

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,

Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,

Empty the haunted air and gnomed mine—

Unweave a rainbow, as it erstwhile made

The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.

Personally, Bernard said to himself, he had never gone along with Keats about all that stuff. By "philosophy" Keats seemed to mean natural science, and, personally, he, Bernard, would rather have the optical mysteries of waves and particles in the water and the light of the rainbow than any old gnome or fay. He had been at least as interested in the problems of reflection and refraction when he had had the lovely snake in his pool as he had been in its oddity—in its *otherness*—as snakes went. He hoped that no natural scientist would come along and find Melanie's blood group to be that of some sort of *Herpes*, or do an x-ray and see something odd in her spine. She made a very good blowsy sort of a woman, just right for Raymond. He wondered what sort of a woman she would have become for him, and dismissed the problem. He didn't want a woman. He wanted another visual idea. A mystery to be explained by rule and line. He looked around his breakfast table. A rather plain orange-brown butterfly was sipping the juice of the rejected peaches. It had a golden eye at the base of its wings and a lovely white streak, shaped like a tiny dragon's wing. It stood on the glistening, rich yellow peach flesh and maneuvered its body to sip the sugary juices, and suddenly it was not orange-brown at all; it was a rich, gleaming, intense purple. And then it was both at once, orange-gold and purple-veiled, and then it was purple again, and then it folded its wings and the undersides had a purple eye and a soft green streak, and tan, and white edged with charcoal. . .

When he came back with his paint box, it was still turning and sipping. He mixed purple, he mixed orange, he made browns. It was done with a dusting of scales, with refractions of rays. The pigments were discovered and measured, the scales on the wings were noted and *seen*, everything was a mystery—serpents and water and light. He was off again. Exact study would not clip this creature's wings; it would dazzle his eyes with its brightness. Don't go, he begged it, watching and learning, don't go. Purple-and-orange is a terrible and violent fate. There are months of work in it. Bernard attacked it. He was happy, in one of the ways in which human beings are happy. ☼

in a leg of wild boar, the ingredients for a ratatouille, a crate of red wine, and several bottles of eau de vie Poire Williams.

"Brought my own provisions. Show me the stove." He cooked. They ate on the terrace, in the evening. Bernard did not switch on the lights in the pool and did not suggest that Raymond might swim. Raymond in fact did not like swimming; he was too fat to wish to be seen, and preferred eating and smoking. Both men drank rather a lot of red wine and then rather a lot of eau de vie. The smell of the mountain was laced with the smells of pork crackling and cigar smoke. Raymond peered drunkenly at Bernard's current painting. He pronounced it rather sinister, very striking, a bit weird, not quite usual, funny-colored, a bit over the top?—looking at Bernard each time for a response and getting none, as Bernard, exhausted and a little drunk, was largely asleep. They went to bed, and Bernard woke once in the night to realize that he had not shut his bedroom window as he usually did; a shutter was banging. But he was unknissed and solitary; he slid back into unconsciousness.

THE next morning Bernard was up first. He made coffee; he cycled to the village and bought croissants, bread, and peaches; he laid the table on the terrace and poured heated milk into a blue-and-white jug. The pool lay flat and still, quietly and incompatibly shining at the quiet sky.

Raymond made rather a noise coming downstairs. This was because his arm was round a young woman with a great deal of hennaed black hair, who wore a garment of that see-through cheesecloth from India which is sold in every southern French market. The garment was calf-length, clinging, with little shoulder straps, and dyed in a rather musty brownish-black, spattered with little round green spots like peas. It could have been a sundress or a nightdress; it was only too easy to see that the woman wore nothing at all underneath it. The black triangle of her pubic hair swayed with her hips. Her breasts were large and thrusting—that was the word that sprang to Bernard's mind. The nipples stood out in the cheesecloth.

"This is Melanie," Raymond announced, pulling out a chair for her. She flung back her hair with an actressy gesture of her hands and sat down gracefully, pulling the cheesecloth round her knees and staring down

at her ankles. She had long, pale, hairless legs with very pretty feet. Her toenails were varnished with a pearly pink varnish. She turned them this way and that, admiring them. She wore rather a lot of very pink lipstick and smiled in a satisfied way at her own toes.

"Do you want coffee?" Bernard said to Melanie.

"She doesn't speak English," Raymond said. He leaned over and made a guzzling, kissing noise in the hollow of her collarbone. "Do you, darling?"

He was obviously going to make no attempt to explain her presence. It was not even quite clear that he felt Bernard had a right to an explanation, or that he himself had any idea where Melanie had come from. He was simply obsessed. His fingers were pulled toward her hair like needles to a magnet: he kept standing up and kissing her breasts, her shoulders, her ears. With considerable distaste Bernard watched Raymond's fat tongue explore the coil of Melanie's ear.

"Will you have coffee?" he asked Melanie in French. He indicated the coffeepot. She bent her head toward it with a quick curving movement, sniffed it, and then hovered briefly over the milk jug.

"This," she said, indicating the hot milk. "I will drink this."



"I am so unhappy," it said.

"I am sorry," Bernard said stupidly, treading water. He felt the black coils slide against his naked legs, a tail tip across his private parts.

"You are a very beautiful man," the snake said in a languishing voice.

"You are a very beautiful snake," Bernard replied courteously, watching the absurd eyelashes dip and lift.

"I am not entirely a snake. I am an enchanted spirit, a lamia. If you will kiss my mouth, I will become a most beautiful woman; and if you will marry me, I will be eternally faithful and gain an immortal soul. I will also bring you power, and riches, and knowledge you never dreamed of. But you must have faith in me."

Bernard turned over on his side and floated, disentangling his brown legs from the twining colored coils. The snake sighed.

"You do not believe me. You find my present form too loathsome to touch. I love you. I have watched you for months, and I love and worship your every movement, your powerful body, your formidable brow, the movements of your hands when you paint. Never in all my thousands of years have I seen so perfect a male being. I will do *anything* for you—"

"Anything?"

"Oh, *anything*. Ask. Do not reject me."

"What I want," Bernard said, swimming toward the craggy end of the pool, with the snake stretched out behind him, "what I want is to be able to paint your portrait, *as you are*, for certain reasons of my own, and because I find you very beautiful. If you would consent to remain here for a little time, as a snake, with all these amazing colors and lights, if I could paint you *in my pool*, just for a little time. . ."

"And then you will kiss me, and we will be married, and I shall have an immortal soul."

"Nobody nowadays believes in immortal souls," Bernard said.

"It does not matter if you believe in them or not," the snake said. "You have one, and it will be horribly tormented if you break your pact with me."

Bernard did not point out that he had not made a pact, not having answered her request yes or no. He wanted quite desperately that she should remain in his pool, in her present form, until he had solved the colors, and was almost prepared for a Faustian damnation.

A FEW weeks of hectic activity followed. The lamia lingered agreeably in the pool, disposing herself wherever she was asked, under or on the water, in the figure three or six or eight or zero, in spirals and tight coils. Bernard painted and swam and painted and swam. He swam less, because he found the lamia's wreathing flirtatiousness oppressive, though occasionally, to encourage her, he stroked

her sleek sides, or wound her tail round his arm or his arm round her tail. He never painted her head, which he found hideous and repulsive. Bernard liked snakes but he did not like women. The lamia, with female intuition, began to sense his lack of enthusiasm for this aspect of her. "My teeth," she told him, "will be lovely in rosy lips, my eyes will be melting and mysterious in a human face. Kiss me, Bernard, and you will see."

"Not yet, not yet," Bernard said.

"I will not wait forever," the lamia said.

BERNARD remembered where he had seen her before. He looked her up one evening in Keats, and there she was—teeth, eyelashes, frecklings, streaks and bars, sapphires, greens, amethyst, and rubious-argent. He had always found the teeth and eyelashes repulsive, and had supposed that Keats was, as usual, piling excess on excess. Now he decided that Keats must have seen one himself, or read someone who had, and must have felt the same mixture of aesthetic frenzy and repulsion. Mary Douglas, the anthropologist, says that *mixed* things—neither flesh nor fowl, so to speak—always excite repulsion and prohibition. The poor lamia was a mess, as far as her head went. Her beseeching eyes were horrible. He looked up from his reading and saw her snake face peering sadly in at the window, her halo shimmering, her teeth shining like pearls. He saw to his locks: he was not about to be unwittingly kissed in his sleep. They were each other's prisoners, he and she. He would paint his painting and think how to escape.

The painting was getting somewhere. The snake colors were a fourth term in the equation of pool and sky and mountains-trees. Their movement in the aquamarines linked and divided delectably, firing the neurons in Bernard's brain to greater and greater activity, and thus causing the lamia to become sulkier and eventually duller and less brilliant.

"I am *so sad*, Bernard. I want to be a woman."

"You've had thousands of years already. Give me a few more days."

"You see how kind I am, when I am in pain."

WHAT would have happened if Raymond Potter had not kept his word will never be known. Bernard had quite forgotten the liver-fluke conversation and Raymond's promised, or threatened, visit. But one day he heard wheels on his track, and saw Potter's dark-red BMW creeping up the slope.

"Hide," he said to the lamia. "Keep still. It's a dreadful Englishman of the fe-fi-fo-fum sort; he has a shouting voice, he *makes jokes*, he smokes cigars, he's bad news, *hide*."

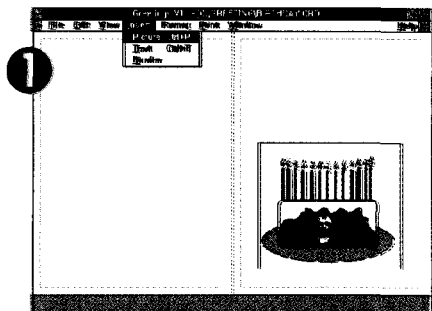
The lamia slipped underwater in a flurry of bubbles like the Milky Way.

Raymond Potter came out of the car smiling, and carried

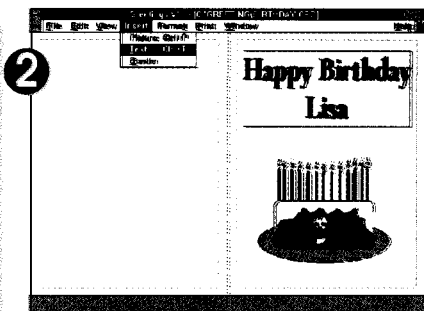


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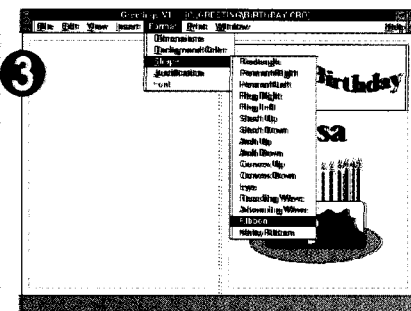
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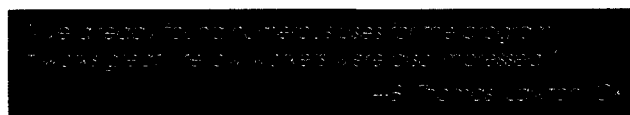
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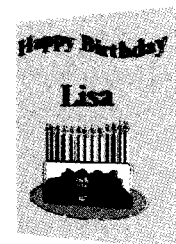
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friend Raymond Potter telephoned from London to say that he might come on a visit; Bernard, who could not cope with visitors, was noncommittal, and tried to describe his delicious flood as a minor disaster.

"You don't want river water," Raymond Potter said. "What about liver flukes and things, and bilharzia?"

"They don't have bilharzia in the Cévennes," Bernard said.

THE Emeraude young men came and turned off the machine, which groaned, made a sipping sound, and relapsed into silence. The water in the pool had a grassy depth it hadn't had. It was a lovely color, a natural color, a color that harmonized with the hills, and it was not the problem Bernard was preoccupied with. It would clear, the young men assured him, once the filtration was working again.

BERNARD went swimming in the green water. His body slipped into its usual movements. He looked down for his shadow and thought he saw out of the corner of his eye a swirling movement in the depths, a shadowy coiling. It would be strange, he said to himself, if a big snake were down there, moving around. The dolphin was blue in green gloom. Bernard spread his arms and legs and floated. He heard a rippling sound of movement, turned his head, and found he was swimming alongside a yellow-green frog, a frog with a salmon patch on its cheek and another on its butt, the color of the roe of scallops. It made vigorous thrusts with its hind legs and vanished into the skimmer, from the mouth of which it peered out at Bernard. The underside of its throat beat, beat, cream-colored. When it emerged, Bernard cupped his hands under its cool wet body and lifted it over the edge: it clung to his fingers with its own tiny fingers, and then went away, in long hops. Bernard went on swimming. There was still a kind of movement in the depths that was not his own.

THE odd stirrings persisted for some days, although the young men set the filter in motion, tipped in sacks of white salt, and did indeed restore the aquamarine transparency, as promised. Now and then he saw a shadow that was not his; now and then something moved behind him; he felt the water swirl and tug. This did not alarm him, because he both believed and disbelieved his senses. He liked to imagine a snake. Bernard liked snakes. He liked the darting river snakes and the long silver-brown grass snakes that traveled through the grasses beside the river.

Sometimes he swam at night, which is when he first definitely saw the snake, only for a few moments, after he had switched on the underwater lights, which made the water look like turquoise milk. There under the milk was something very large, something coiled in two intertwined figures of eight and like no snake he had ever seen—a velvety black,

it seemed, with long bars of crimson and peacock-eyed spots, gold, green, blue, mixed with silver moon shapes, all of which appeared to dim and brighten and breathe under the deep water. Bernard did not try to touch; he sat down carefully and stared. He could see neither head nor tail; the form appeared to be a continuous coil, like a Möbius strip. And the colors changed as he watched them: the gold and silver lit up and went out, like lamps; the eyes expanded and contracted; the bars and stripes flamed with electric vermilion and crimson and then changed to purple, to blue, to green, moving through the rainbow. He tried professionally to commit the forms and the colors to memory. He looked up for a moment at the night sky. The Plough hung very low, and the stars in Orion's belt glittered white-gold on thick midnight velvet. When he looked back, the pearly water was vacant.

Many men might have run roaring in terror; the courageous might have prodded with a pool net; the extravagant might have reached for a shotgun. What Bernard saw was a solution to his professional problem—at least a nocturnal solution. Between the night sky and the breathing, dissolving eyes and moons in the depths, the color of the water was solved, dissolved; it became a medium to contain a darkness spangled with living colors. He went in and took notes in watercolor and gouache. He went out and stared, and the pool was empty.

FOR several days he neither saw nor felt the snake. He tried to remember it, and to trace its markings into his pool paintings, which became very tentative and watery. He swam even more than usual, invoking the creature from time to time. "Come back," he said to the pleasant blue depths, to the twisting, coiling lines of rainbow light. "Come back—I need you."

And then, one day, when a thunderstorm was gathering behind the crest of the mountains, when the sky darkened and the pool was unreflective, he felt the alien tug of the other current again and looked round quick, quick, to catch it. And there was a head, urging itself sinuously through the water beside his own, and there below his body coiled the miraculous black-velvet rope or tube, with its shimmering moons and stars, its peacock eyes, its crimson bands.

The head was a snake's head, diamond-shaped, half the size of his own head, swarthy and scaled, with a strange little crown of pale lights hanging above it like its own rainbow. He turned cautiously to look at it and saw that it had large eyes with fringed eyelashes—human eyes, very lustrous, very liquid, very black. He opened his mouth, swallowed water by accident, coughed. The creature watched him and then opened its mouth in turn, which was full of small, even, pearly human teeth. Between these protruded a flickering, dark forked tongue, entirely serpentine. Bernard felt a prick of recognition. The creature sighed. It spoke. It spoke in Cévenol French, very sibilant but comprehensible.

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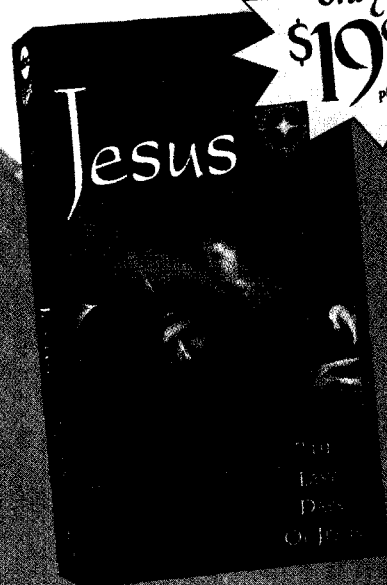
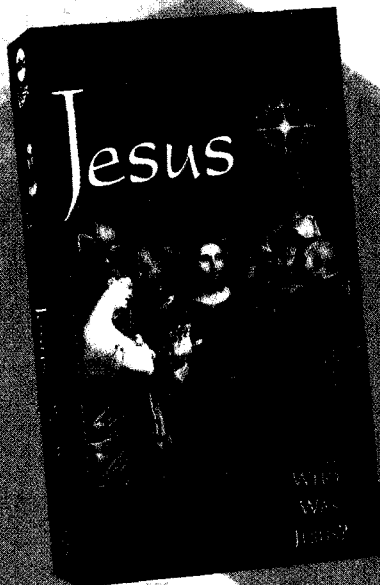
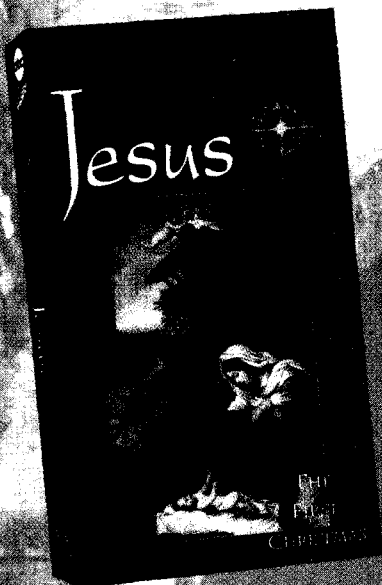
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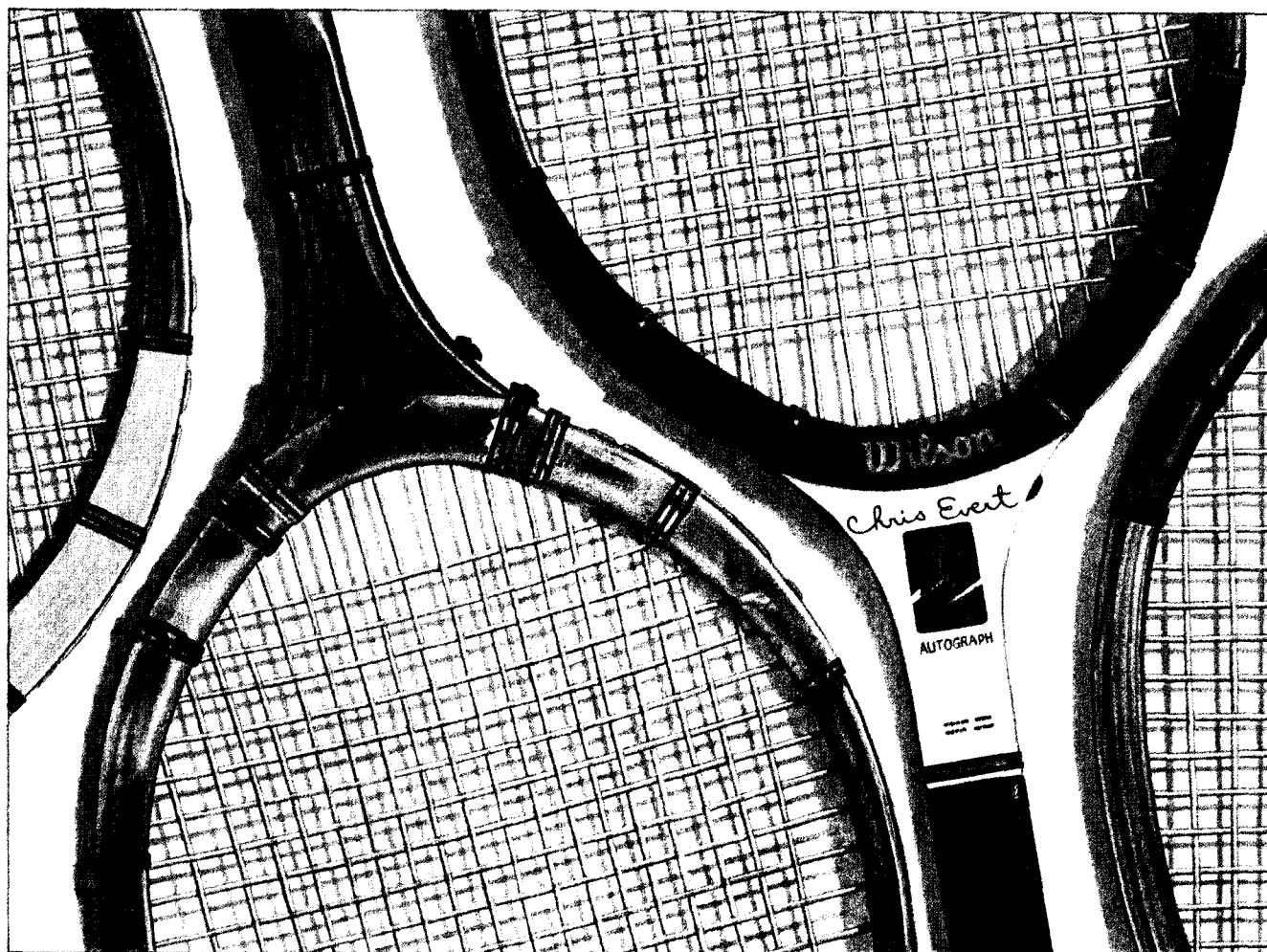
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The Feel of Wood

*As a growing number of players
are rediscovering, tennis is at its best when the
racket is the traditional size—and
made of wood*

IN late June of 1994 the Sesuit Tennis Center, on Cape Cod, looked like 1974. White shirts, white shorts, and short white tennis dresses adorned the green hard courts, along with white caps and floppy white "Aussie" hats. The tennis balls were white too. Most striking of all, looking thin and frail hanging from the arms of the players,

by Marshall Fisher

were the wood rackets: Dunlop Maxply Fort, Wilson Jack Kramer Autograph, Chris Evert Autograph.

Looking around as I walked to the baseline to serve, I felt as if I were back at the Kendalltown Tennis Club, in suburban Miami, twenty years earlier. The only thing missing was the once-popular Wilson T2000—steel scepter of

the brat king, Jimmy Connors. For this was the First Annual Woody Tournament of Cape Cod, the local exemplar of a recent nationwide phenomenon. No steel, aluminum, graphite, titanium, or composite need apply. If it didn't come from a tree, leave it at home.

To some, the premise of the tournament may have been a novelty; my first-round opponent had never before played with wood. To others, it meant merely the resurfacing of a quaint memory—"Can you believe we actually played with these things?" But to me—and to many others, I soon discovered—it was something much more.

In the week before the tournament, as I practiced with my old Kramers (last used in 1982, my first year of college tennis), I was visited by a long-forgotten pleasure: the feel of wood. Sure, it was harder to find the sweet spot on the smaller head; and even when I did, there was none of the space-age power of today's launch

pads. It required a lot more skill to hit any particular shot. At the net I really had to *volley*, with the correct half-swing form; I couldn't just stick out my shield and rely on its innate power. Fundamental technique, remembered deep in the muscles, became critical again.

The game was also more fun.

IN the early 1970s, when racket manufacturers were experimenting with new metal designs, a bread-and-butter advertising campaign bragged of "the power of metal, with the feel of wood." Every kid learning the game quickly came to know that steel was for power and wood for control. The consensus, though, was that the strength you got with metal was not enough to make up for the loss of touch. Connors swore by his T2000 (customized with lead tape to weight the head), but for the most part wood held its ground.

Then, in 1976, Howard Head stepped in and changed tennis forever. Having given the world the metal ski and the composite tennis racket, Head had retired from his namesake company and was wishing that he could get more power into his tennis game. The result was the first big-head racket, and a new company, Prince. At first the comical green giant of a racket that was the Prince prototype met with general resistance. Older women on the courts were suddenly volleying much better, but the main reaction to the Prince Classic was laughter. The company's next model, the sleek black Prince Pro, helped win over some male players, but for a few years the oversized racket remained an object of scorn. However, by 1981, although Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe were still winning championships with wood, most junior players had made the switch. The power of the big rackets was too much to forswear. In 1982 Chris Evert won the U.S. Open with a conventional-sized racket, but the majority of players at the Open wielded big rackets, and for the first time more than half of all rackets sold were oversized. That was the year Martina Navratilova switched to the big elliptical head of the Yonex R-7 just three weeks before the French Open and won it for the first time. Navratilova became the first player to win a major tournament with a big-head racket (Mats Wilander became the second the following day), and helped to

make 1982 the Year of the Switch. "When big rackets first came out," she said at the time, "I thought they should have been outlawed. But since they weren't, why shouldn't I use one too?"

In 1980 the International Tennis Federation had convened to discuss its options regarding oversized rackets and "spaghetti strings," another 1970s innovation, in which the strings were kept loose and wrapped with coils of various materials to produce unprecedented spin on the ball. The ITF passed tennis's first official specifications for strings and rackets, outlawing spaghetti strings but allowing oversized rackets. This enabled the introduction, in 1987, of wide-body rackets that made the normal oversized rackets relatively as weak as wood ones had been. And now we have monstrosities like the new Prince Vortex, which uses "a graphite-fiber-reinforced thermoplastic viscoelastic polymer" to create variable flexibility. Fifteen years after the ITF's anemic regulations were enacted, most tennis fans lament the state of the professional men's game, in which a typical point consists of an ace, or perhaps one or two cannonball shots after the serve. The power that professionals can summon from state-of-the-art rackets is simply too much for the delicate touch game of yore to survive. A player like Goran Ivanesevich, who has a Herculean serve and not much more (by professional standards), can reach the finals at Wimbledon.

Revisionist proposals for improving the game have surfaced from time to time: make the balls heavier; make the court larger; take away the second serve. But this is like curing halitosis by distributing nose plugs.

Is the solution too simple to see? Bring back wood. Major-league baseball requires wood bats for a similar reason—so that players don't start hitting a hundred homers a season, and 12–10 doesn't become a routine score. But tennis-racket companies are making too much money to let wood return without a fight: in 1975 the Dunlop Maxply—as good a wood racket as then existed—cost \$25; by 1980 a decent oversized racket cost at least \$100, and now many popular models cost more than \$150. If the players and fans had made a stand in 1980, they could have persuaded the ITF to require conventional equipment for the pros, as in

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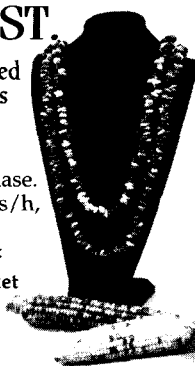
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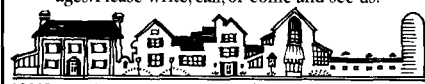
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baseball. In fact, they could do it now without impinging on the racket companies' wealth, because most amateurs would still buy oversized rackets, just as softball players and amateur baseball players (even in the NCAA) use aluminum bats. But fifteen years' worth of big-head professional tennis will be difficult to overcome.

My brother and I were among the last defenders of wood rackets. As college teammates—his senior year, 1982, was my freshman year—we stood alone with our toothpicks against an approaching army of oversized technological wonders. Through the regular season Ron, with his enviable speed and touch, managed to remain undefeated in the No. 1 position, against a barrage of scientifically enhanced cannonball serves. At the Division 3 national championships in Kalamazoo he was virtually the only player in the sixty-four-man draw using a conventional racket. He remembers it as an immense psychological (not to mention physical) disadvantage—like fighting against rifles with bows and arrows. In the first round he lost a close match to the No. 2 seed.

That fall I showed up at school with two new mid-sized aluminum Yonex R-1s. Having to compete against the new rackets, I decided there was no point in clinging to wood—it just made me feel weak and small. But at the woody tournament last year, I saw all over again how the ineluctable march of technology had degraded tennis. It's a better sport with wood.

In April of 1991 Bjorn Borg reappeared on the professional tennis circuit after a mysterious nine-year absence—mysterious because when he retired, at the end of 1981, he was twenty-six years old, in the best physical shape a human being can be in, and had won five of the past six Wimbledons, not to mention the past four French Opens.

Borg had said he was simply sick of tennis. But perhaps he was also sick of what he saw tennis becoming. Although he and McEnroe fought their historic battles with wood in their hands, big-head Huns were visible on the horizon. How were these aging touch-and-speed players supposed to hold their ground?

Sure enough, by 1983 McEnroe was wielding a mid-sized graphite Dunlop. Connors was still standing by his stash

of old T2000s, but after that year he would never win another major tournament. And Borg was gone with the wood.

When he resurfaced after ten years, he looked like one of King Arthur's knights on a Connecticut Yankee's backyard court. Young, powerful paladins battled one another on the red clay of Monte Carlo, blasting serves with the latest generation of oversized, wide-body rackets. And there was Borg stepping onto the clay, pigeon-toed as ever, dangling from his right hand a black wood anachronism, custom-made by Gray's of Cambridge to replicate his old Donnay model.

He never had a chance. Although he was still in top physical condition, his shots looked ludicrously soft, floating lazily across the net before taking a beating from Jordi Arrese's oversized racket. Six-two, six-three, and the comeback was over for now. Borg quietly canceled his plans to enter the French Open.

The next summer he was back, resigned to the times, swinging a bright-orange big-head racket. At the U.S. Pro Championships, a nontour event at the Longwood Cricket Club, near Boston, he strode to the court through a tunnel of admirers befitting a rock star, his sharp Viking features humbly tilted to the ground. And he almost pulled it off, winning his first match before losing in the quarter finals to Alexander Volkov, the twenty-second-ranked player in the world, 7-5 in the deciding third set. It would be his last gasp. A few months later the comeback was over for good, and Borg moved to the Master's circuit with his old nemesis Connors, who now also sported a flashy new oversized racket.

AFTER playing in the Cape Cod tournament I became obsessed with wood rackets. I had feverish dreams: wandering through sporting-goods stores, finding Maxplys and Kramers on the racks selling for thousands of dollars. Or playing matches with wood rackets that fell to pieces as I hit the ball. I dreamed of wood rackets the way others dream of childhood—as belonging to a better,

more innocent world, a paradise lost. I set out on a mission: to acquire at least one Dunlop Maxply in playing condition. Although my Jack Kramer was certainly a classic model, the Maxply was my idea of the consummate wood racket.

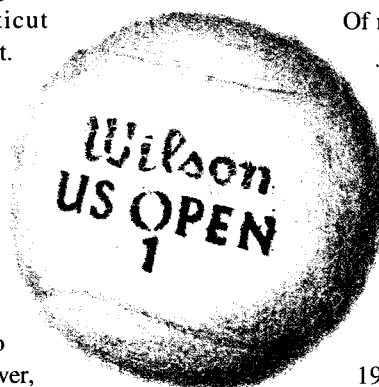
Of medium stiffness, it was just right for a balanced mixture of serve-and-volley and base-line play. And its spartan design emphasized its sylvan origins: it really *looked* like a piece of wood.

Introduced in 1931, by the 1960s and early 1970s it had become the most popular racket in the world, and it still brought to my mind images of the great players who had used it, from Lew Hoad to Rod Laver to McEnroe.

But where would I find one? All summer I scoured tag sales in vain. Surely there had to be some wood rackets in a basement somewhere, waiting to be exhumed and sold off with the LPs, eight-tracks, and typewriters. The closest I came to success, however, was at the local public courts, where I spotted a ten-year-old boy knocking a ball against the battered backboard with an actual Dunlop Maxply, circa 1976. As the boy and his father walked off the court, I approached and asked if they were interested in selling the relic. But I must have betrayed my zeal, for the father's eyes lit up. "This baby?" he said. "Sorry, I love these old rackets." He probably thought from my enthusiasm that he had a collector's item on his hands. But as far as I knew, I was the only market for old Maxplys, and I had just a few dollars to offer.

As it turned out, though, I was not alone. I began to hear about other woody tournaments around the country. "They're cropping up everywhere," a Dunlop product manager told me. The Waltham Racket Club, an indoor club outside Boston, had had one the previous winter. A Dunlop sales representative I got in touch with had played in one in Maine the previous summer. An invitation-only tournament took place in Los Angeles in the fall.

And then, this March, I received a faxed announcement with the automated sender information "From: WOODY H.Q.



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SNOWLION
ADVENTURES

Wood is Good!" A drawing underneath depicted a 1920s tennis player in long white pants. The ornate announcement made my mouth water. "The Woody Tennis Championships," it read. "A Gentlemen's Grass Court Event." Grass courts!—the one ingredient missing from the Cape Cod tournament. What wood is to graphite, grass is to asphalt. One is natural, bucolic, reminiscent of the game's origins on lush country lawns; the other is synthetic, modern, with the ambiance of a strip mall. And although the play at Wimbledon (the only major tournament still played on grass) might suggest that grass exacerbates the trouble with today's game—power shots skid away even faster, lessening the potential for long rallies—it is the perfect surface for wood-racket tennis. One needn't hit a 120 mph serve to have a chance; the quickness of grass allows a serve that is well placed to set up a winning volley. Yet the pace remains slow enough with wood that one needs, and has a chance to use, every shot in the book. The chip return, the slice approach shot, the defensive underspin lob, all find their strategic moment. And the feel of grass underfoot complements the feel of wood in the hand: these are the conditions for which the game was designed. Although I grew up playing mainly on hard courts, tennis with big rackets on asphalt sometimes seems as much an abomination as baseball indoors on AstroTurf.

This attitude is not just nostalgia. You'll never find a downhill race restricted to wood skis, or a rage for tackle football played with leather helmets and no facemasks. Woody tournaments are burgeoning because of a growing conviction that tennis is a better sport when played with conventional rackets. Recently, influential tennis personalities such as Bud Collins and Martina Navratilova (finally) have urged the ITF to consider returning to wood. If the racket companies look back to the great tennis boom of the early 1970s, when the wood racket reigned, and if woody tournaments continue to spread, then who knows?

Such hopeful visions resurfaced as I gazed at the grass courts of the PGA West Tennis Club, in La Quinta, California. Four rectangles of chalk embroidered a level green basin carved out of an elegant lawn and framed by a 180-degree vista of snow-peaked desert mountains.

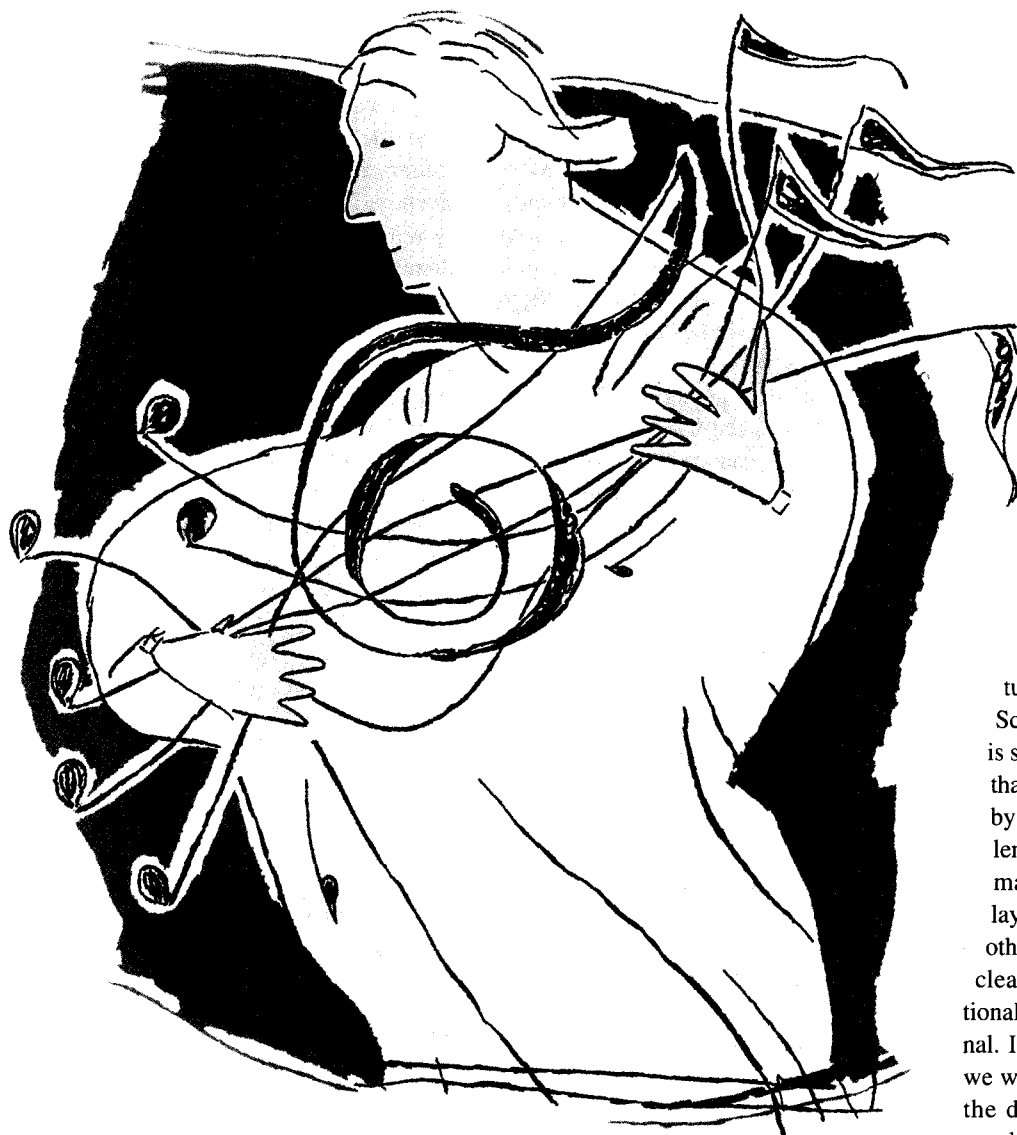
In my bag rested two aged Maxplys, rescued from Boston thrift shops.

Granville Swope, the man behind the Woody H.Q. fax and a codirector of the Woody Tennis Championships, had invited me to come out and play in the tournament. I could hardly decline. Since the age of ten I have dreamed of playing on grass, and in these dreams, even in recent years, the rackets have always been made of wood.

The reality was no disappointment. The grass, fastidiously manicured for the pleasure of the wealthy, played true. My painful shin splints dissolved on the soft putting-green surface. An impressive gathering of players—teaching pros, former Division 1 college players, some veterans of pro tournaments—knocked around white balls with the wood rackets they'd grown up with, showing little difficulty in the transition. Although some players still served at speeds over 100 mph, most serves were returnable, and long rallies were common. Touch volleys won out where brutal overhead smashes, deadened by the grass, were often lobbed back with ease.

On the day of the finals (which I was not in) I practiced on a back court in bare feet. I was running along a field with a stick in my hand, chasing a flash of white.

THESE days, when I play tennis, it's almost always with one friend or another who has far less experience than I have on a tennis court, and I use a wood Maxply. At that level wood isn't even a disadvantage—I wouldn't want to utilize the full power of a big racket. We're playing just for fun, and it's more fun with the wood: I can feel the ball with my muscles as I hit, and I can place it instead of pulverizing it. When I play a competitive match, I resort to my modern oversized racket—the joy of wood is lost if I spend the whole match fighting uphill against superior power. The most fun, however, is when my brother and I find time to go to the deserted public clay courts we discovered out in the country. We bring our wood rackets. Long base-line rallies, carefully planned approach shots, and volleys that need to be crisp and angled to win the point: we can almost imagine that big-head rackets went the way of spaghetti strings, and that tennis is still the game it should be. ☞



American Harvest

The present period in American contemporary music may have no name, but the music itself is flourishing

THE past hundred years have been an extraordinary period in American music, beginning with Charles Ives and the inventors of jazz and continuing with the generation of Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Edgard Varèse, George Gershwin, and Duke Ellington. To name only a few of the other highlights, there have been the mid-century

symphonists and neoclassicists, the flowering of American musical theater, the rise of all kinds of pop music, the experimentalists and serialists of the postwar era, the music of Elliott Carter, and the minimalist and the post-minimalists. We are now at what would appear to be both an end and a beginning.

Surely the notion of a "music of the fu-

ture" has been exhausted. We now know the fate of much of this century's innovative music—music that once seemed a harbinger of things to come. Much has survived, but because of its substance—not because of what it foreshadowed. The sounds and techniques of John Cage, Pierre Boulez, and Karlheinz Stockhausen are now a part of music's vocabulary. But no one could claim that they constitute the only wellsprings of current developments. They stand alongside African drumming, the music of Bali, and the iso-rhythmic motets of the fourteenth century. If the music of Varèse, Arnold Schoenberg, Ives, and Henry Cowell is still very much with us, so are works that once seemed old-fashioned: pieces by Dmitry Shostakovich, Francis Poulenc, Samuel Barber, and Sergei Rachmaninoff. Can these works not also lay claim to being of their time and no other? As the years pass, one sees more clearly the ways in which these traditionalists were both inventive and original. If they had been true conservatives, we would not today so readily recognize the distinctive voice of each, and we would have long ago considered them mere purveyors of musicological artifice and nostalgia.

Now, in a period of relative stability, we are reaping a steady harvest from all these seeds. In the music of some composers—William Bolcom, for example—one can find traces of multiple influences, sometimes in a single piece. Other composers have synthesized into one language strains of twentieth-century music that used to be disparate. Joan Tower, for instance, has developed a lean and directly expressive language that stems from the thinking and hearing associated with serialism and also harks back to the forthrightness of the music of Carl Ruggles and mid-century America.

But this musical time has, as of yet, no name. The terms used to describe some of its currents—"postmodernism," "neoromanticism"—describe it only in terms of the past. One does not describe a fresh

by Allen Shawn

meal as leftovers. I am convinced that the time we live in is one of the richest in music history, and will be remembered for the freshness, imagination, skill, substance, and deep emotion of its new music—not to mention sheer abundance. If the past decade or so has seen the disappearance of the notion that a work of art must be ostentatiously innovative in order to be taken seriously, that does not mean that there are not new works of startling originality. A glance at the “classical” music section in any large music store confirms the fact that contemporary music is flourishing, despite the periodic rumors, now almost a century old, that music itself “is history.”

IT is always wonderful to read those who are steeped in the music of our time—people like Richard Dyer, Andrew Porter, Michael Steinberg, Tim Page, and the *Atlantic* contributor David Schiff. It is even more wonderful, and rarer, to encounter this quality in great performers. Ursula Oppens and Yo-Yo Ma are active proponents of the new who are also unmatched performers of the old.

Oppens brings her customary intellectual grasp and pianistic brilliance to *American Piano Music*, Volumes I and II, on the Music & Arts label (CDs 604 and 699). The second volume contains a wonderfully varied program of works by Conlon Nancarrow, Frederic Rzewski, Charles Wuorinen, Tobias Picker, John Harbison, and Anthony Davis. All the works on this recording were written specifically for Oppens, who is unequalled in her ability to reveal the shape and shadings of contemporary works; her playing has the long line of which Nadia Boulanger, that other champion of the newly written and the as yet unwritten, spoke so often to her students. Her timbres guide, sing, and reveal; they are not applied to the piece but emerge from its needs. In the floating, lonely strands that make up Picker’s “Old and Lost Rivers” or the spiky, rambunctious thickets of Wuorinen’s manic “The Blue Bamboula,” she is never without a sense of direction.

Particularly impressive is the John Harbison Piano Sonata No. 1, with its wonderfully satisfying slow-fast-slow onemovement shape. Neither new-fashioned

nor old-fashioned, it is quite simply itself. Recently Harbison mentioned in a radio interview an interest in “imagined exotic cultures.” The delicately ornamental writing of the opening slow section in this piece seems to come from a kindred impulse; the birdcalls of Olivier Messiaen’s piano writing are also a reference point. The dynamic central section, with its offbeat, unmistakably American rhythms, emerges seamlessly from these quiet figures, subsiding ultimately into an introspective close.

But each piece on this album deserves and repays repeated listening. The bracing Nancarrow canons, although similar in design to the composer’s classic piano-roll compositions (there are sixty of these), elicit a special pleasure and astonishment in Oppens’s human performance, because the canonic imitation is filtered through a mind that understands, and varieties of touch give character to the material.



Characteristic Nancarrow allusions to the early jazz he loves are embedded in the canonic dialogue; in the first canon a boogie-woogie bass emerges briefly in the left hand, appearing later in other registers and at other speeds. This is not music to sit back and listen to with eyes closed. I recommend putting it on first thing in the morning after

a strong cup of coffee.

Also on this CD are two beautiful pieces inspired by historical events. Rzewski contributes “Mayn Yingele,” a poignant set of variations on a Yiddish ballad, in memory of Kristallnacht. Anthony Davis, whose brooding soliloquy “Middle Passage” explores a vocabulary of dense chords, rhythmically improvisatory motifs, and contrapuntal lines, was inspired by the Robert Hayden poem of the same name about a rebellion aboard a slave ship en route to America. The piece has the flavor of tragedy and heroism recollected.

Yo-Yo Ma’s recording of Leonard Bernstein, Gershwin, Ives, and Leon Kirchner (Sony Classical SK 53126) pairs two gracious and tuneful pieces (the Bernstein and the Gershwin) with two knotty and ambitious ones. The Kirchner *Triptych* for violin and cello, played marvelously by Lynn Chang and Ma, is a welcome addition to the rather slim

repertoire for this combination of instruments. On the scale of the Ravel Sonata for Violin and Cello, and as demanding technically, the piece has the satisfying heft of a string quartet. Kirchner has always had a special affinity for string writing, and this rhapsodic, rhythmically inventive dialogue, which is introduced by a nine-minute rumination for cello alone, is wonderfully idiomatic and colorful. Like all of Kirchner’s music, the piece is an elegantly crafted text for a drama that mimics spontaneity and at times even borders on hysteria, but does so within a sensuous and beautiful language. Kirchner is well known, but not well enough. Born in 1919, he continues to write music of youthful ardor—mature and masterly, to be sure, but closest in spirit to the ripe urgencies of early Alban Berg, early Béla Bartók, and early Schoenberg, and close to the spirit of ferment of the early part of the century. A public used to “grand old men” may find such a figure hard to place: if Norman Mailer or Saul Bellow were exploding with new, challenging novels, he would be a similar figure. Kirchner’s works are vibrant; though steeped in emotion, the writing is both intricate and transparent, shot through with light.

TOBIA S Picker’s piano piece “Old and Lost Rivers” is something of an anomaly in the composer’s writing. In contrast to this quiet tone poem, which also exists in a ravishing orchestral version (Virgin Classics CD 59007), most of Picker’s pieces seem like mosaics of abrupt shifts in which passages of varying textures, tempi, and affects jostle for attention. Yet in Picker’s music these passages cohere into an expressive unity. There is something painterly about his music. One could perhaps compare the experience of listening to his work to that of looking at a Jackson Pollock or Helen Frankenthaler painting bit by bit and then standing back and seeing the whole.

Born in 1954, Picker was twenty-eight years old when he composed *Keys to the City*, a piano concerto commissioned to be played outdoors, at the Brooklyn Bridge, as part of a celebration of the bridge’s hundredth anniversary. This piece delightfully combines the twelve-



tone world with evocations of boogie-woogie, Gershwin, and Bernstein. With its recurrent aquatic-sounding ostinati and arching, far-flung string melodies, the piece manages to suggest the bridge itself, the East River, and the history of the Lower East Side. On the CRI recording (CD 554) of the Brooklyn Philharmonic performance, conducted by Lukas Foss, the flamboyant solo part is played by the composer himself.

Important early pieces by Picker, garnered from two previously issued CRI LPs, are now available on one CD (CRI 589). This recording combines performances of four chamber pieces, including the haunting and eventful Romance for Violin and Piano, with the very individual violin concerto of 1985–1986. Two powerful recent scores, the Symphony No. 2: *Aussöhnung*, and the String Quartet No. 1: *New Memories*, can be heard on Elektra/Nonesuch (79246-2). The symphony makes ingenious use of an original song by Picker in a late-nineteenth-century idiom not far from that of late Strauss and Mahler. The song forms the basis for all the material in the nine-movement work, and in the seventh movement a soprano sings it—an oasis of what the composer calls “explicit” tonality in an otherwise merely “suggestively tonal” piece. In this and in the poetic and intense string quartet that accompanies it, one discerns a deepening, and perhaps a darkening, of Picker’s language.

AN example of the abundance of new music of quality by Americans who may not yet be well known is provided by a recording of two distinctive pieces—Three Dances for string quartet and the piano piece *Chartres* (CRI 640)—by the composer David Macbride, who was born in 1951. Macbride composes music of quiet assurance and sonorous appeal—music of directness with, as Tim Page puts it in his liner notes, “none of the learned grayness of the academy” about it. And yet it is formed with a highly developed and consistent language. It seems a private music, which, though born of a cool, meditative mind, nevertheless can rise to peaks of intense emotion. In these peaks it differs greatly from the music of Cage and Morton Feldman, who appear to be influences. These works exude an almost Buddhist tranquillity,

and seem to generate a sense of space. But there is grit, passion, and even anger in them too.



A fresh ear for harmony and timbre and an unusual sense of form are evident in both the pieces on this recording. *Chartres* is true both to its title and to its instrument. Like stained-glass windows, the three movements let the seams between sections show; the highly unusual middle movement, “Mazes,” is geometric, architectural, mysterious. The forms of the three quartet movements, which are only intermittently dancelike, have a molded, organic quality, as if created by the instruments themselves. Both are fine pieces, but the quartet has the special quality of a breakthrough for its composer.

MORE iconoclastic, totally inimitable, and always surprising is the music of Frederic Rzewski, represented most recently on CD (hat ART 6134) by his Sonata for piano and his work *De Profundis*, which gives the pianist—in this case Rzewski himself—the task of reciting in rhythm a long text by Oscar Wilde (passages from a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas that was written during Wilde’s imprisonment in Reading Gaol) while playing. *De Profundis* is a compositional *tour de force*—part performance art, part theater, part cabaret act, part virtuoso concert piece. Rzewski takes huge risks with each new work. For some he reinvents his entire musical language; with this piece he practically creates a new genre. Setting a spoken text to music is notoriously difficult: one courts disaster in the forms of corniness, pretentiousness, and redundancy. Having the speaker and the musician be the same person—a technique explored by Jon Deak, Laurie Anderson, and others—has its own pitfalls. Rzewski manages to circumvent these by speaking in a manner both natural (no orotund cadences) and rhythmically precise, while going in other directions that mediate between speech and music: rhythmic breathing, whistling, clapping, laughing, drumming on the piano lid and on his own chest. The humor, the fleetness, and the tact of the music complement the intelligence and bare-bones honesty of Wilde’s extraordinary words describing the evolution of his mind and spirit in debased isolation.

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RANDOM  HOUSE

Rzewski's music is notable for its powerful sense of continuity, even in passages of great complexity. This is due in part to the momentum generated by the variation form he favors—the same momentum that gives coherence to a long drum solo in the middle of a jazz composition when it maintains the theme's original structure. But in this case it also derives from the unity and recognizability of the material.

For instance, in the third of *Four North American Ballads* we first hear what seems to be an attractive arrangement of "Down by the Riverside," well known from Vietnam days. This moves seamlessly into a passage in which fragments of the same tune appear in many contrapuntal voices. Not only is the tune totally deconstructed—fragments appear at different speeds, in every conceivable order—but all twelve possible keys are represented. Yet every line so clearly and audibly derives from a portion of the tune that the effect is of a great many people through the ages singing the same melody in different ways.

CHARLES Wuorinen, one of the most prolific composers on the contemporary concert scene, also has a remarkable number of new CDs. Three from New York's Group for Contemporary Music alone have appeared in recent years, and also *Music of Two Decades* (Music & Arts CD 800), with several performances by the group Speculum Musicae. In addition, Wuorinen's music for violin and piano has been recorded by Benjamin Hudson and Garrick Ohlsson, on New World Records (NW 385-2). And several large-scale works are widely available, including the San Francisco Symphony's account of *The Golden Dance*, and the Piano Concerto No. 3, with Garrick Ohlsson as soloist (Elektra/None-such 79185-2).

No one could claim that Wuorinen has come by this exposure through a facile pandering to popular tastes. Born in 1938, he developed in the 1960s a musical language that grew out of the late serial works of Igor Stravinsky and the stylistic traits and compositional approaches of Stefan Wolpe, Milton Babbitt, and Elliott Carter. Although he remains a committed serialist, Wuorinen has perhaps relaxed his grip on some of the tenets of his own serialism in the past

decade or so, and his idiom has evolved almost imperceptibly toward something less confrontational. Wuorinen's music has always had a raw, American quality to it, in spite of its cerebral underpinnings. Though always serially derived, the harmonic language is full of tonal delights—"puns," as the composer calls them, in relation to Stravinsky's tonal-sounding serial writing. Rhythmically there is a kind of athletic directness and extroversion that is more akin to Copland than to Boulez.

It is the sense of fun and joy in its own inventiveness that one first notices about this music, not its methodology. In a class on American music in which I played excerpts of recent works, it was the first movement of Wuorinen's Piano Concerto No. 3, with its irresistible energy and rhythmically exciting writing for piano, percussion, and brass, that needed the least explanation. Exploding like a pumped-up Bach two-part invention, the music made me think about that dread term "accessibility" and how rarely it is used to describe music that is particularly good. Here is music that in substance is very difficult to "understand" (as is Bach) but is not difficult to enjoy. The concerto is accessible in the way the complex music of the past is accessible. It requires participation and a state of alertness—a state of preparedness—but not a knowledge of its inner workings, any more than a piece by Beethoven does.

Thinking about Wuorinen's evolution is instructive. Here is an artist in middle age who twenty years ago might have thought that his way was the only way music ought to proceed. It is tempting to say that he is in the position Bach was in at the end of his life, when his learned contrapuntal style was being supplanted by a more tuneful, accessible style. I don't think that this is the case. In one way or another, all composers develop and perfect idioms that are extensions of the past, and today no one composer will lead the way forward.

But forward we are moving. Given the century we have been through, and the ability we have to assimilate through recordings the works of the entire history of music, today's assimilation in the arts is new—unprecedented, in fact. The music being composed today will always bear the stamp of a time that exists only now. ☛

Photograph: Robert Llewellyn/Superstock

How FDR Derailed the New Deal

A great historian assays the ironies attending Roosevelt's worst political blunder

by David M. Kennedy

THE SUPREME COURT REBORN: The Constitutional Revolution in the Age of Roosevelt

by William E. Leuchtenburg.
Oxford University Press, 350 pages,
\$30.00.

ON "Black Monday," May 27, 1935, the United States Supreme Court handed down three decisions that eviscerated key parts of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and threatened to extinguish his entire program of recovery and reform. The most notorious decision, *Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States*, which has been known to generations of students as the "sick chicken" case, yielded a unanimous ruling that the National Industrial Recovery Act, an instrument forged in the heat of the famed "100 Days" of 1933 and wielded as the Roosevelt Administration's chief weapon in the war against the Depression, was unconstitutional. Congress, the Court declared, had illegitimately delegated law-making authority to the National Recovery Administration—the famed NRA, among the first of the New Deal "alphabet agencies," whose blue-eagle symbol had become a ubiquitous Depression-era logo. For good measure, the Court also defined the Schechter brothers' Brooklyn kosher-poultry business as exclusively *intrastate* in character, thus putting the Schechters' violation of NRA wage and hour codes, not to mention their sale of diseased poultry, beyond the reach of federal power, which was confined by the Constitution to the regulation of *interstate* commerce.

Roosevelt was stunned. So was his Attorney General, Homer Cummings. What was at stake, as this graceful and erudite



book makes brilliantly clear, was nothing less than what *The New Republic* in 1935 called “the very foundation of national power in a modern industrial society.” Could the government act in the face of the greatest economic calamity in American history, or was it to be forever hog-tied by the strictures of the Constitution? “We have been relegated to the horse-and-buggy definition of interstate commerce,” Roosevelt complained. “I tell you, Mr. President,” Cummings fulminated, “they mean to destroy us. . . . We will have to find a way to get rid of the present membership of the Supreme Court.”

Worse was yet to come. In January of 1936 the Court invalidated the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), on the grounds that it exceeded constitutional limits on taxation and encroached on regulatory powers reserved to the states by the Tenth Amendment. Six months later, in *Morehead v. New York ex rel. Tipaldo*, the Court sharply circumscribed the authority of the states themselves, when it struck down a New York minimum-wage law. Roosevelt protested that the *Tipaldo* decision established a “‘no-man’s land’ where no Government—State or Federal—can function.”

WITH his earliest recovery programs repudiated, with constitutional tests of later New Deal achievements like Social Security and the National Labor Relations Acts still working their way through the courts, with the whole New Deal venture in expanding government power at risk, Roosevelt was understandably exasperated. His annoyance with judicial obstructionism was neither singular nor precipitate. In a string of decisions stretching back nearly half a century the federal courts had repeatedly invoked the elusive concept of “substantive due process” to block all kinds of economic legislation, from prohibitions on child labor to the regulation of wages and hours. Substantive due process amounted in practice to the proposition that some “substantive” matters were so sacred—especially property rights and the right of contract—that they lay beyond the reach of any imaginable legislative process or law. In effect, the doctrine of substantive due process made the judiciary the most powerful arm of government, though its power was wholly the power to veto. Reformers since Theodore Roosevelt had decried this un-

warranted “judicial activism,” and beseeched the black-robed, unelected justices to defer to the will of democratically elected legislatures. “Courts are not the only agency of government that must be assumed to have capacity to govern,” Justice Harlan Fiske Stone declared in dissent in the AAA case, in what was by then a familiar criticism. As for the *Tipaldo* decision, Stone privately called it “disastrous. . . . we seem to have tied Uncle Sam up in a hard knot.” Reflecting this accumulated frustration, more than a hundred bills were introduced in Congress in 1936 to redefine the balance of power between the legislative and judicial branches of government. Even Herbert Hoover called for a constitutional amendment to restore to the states “the power they thought they already had,” and the Republican platform in 1936 supported such an amendment.

Small wonder, then, that Roosevelt pursued Cummings’s suggestion to “get rid of the present membership of the Supreme Court.” Indeed, among the array of nostrums prescribed for the nation’s judiciary-induced paralysis in the mid-1930s, and given the decades-old agitation against “judicial supremacy,” the plan that Roosevelt eventually proposed for reforming the federal courts was remarkable not for its boldness but for its mildness—and for its disingenuousness.

Energized by his spectacular electoral victory in November of 1936, Roosevelt sent his Court-reform scheme to Congress on February 5, 1937. He thus began a 168-day ordeal that ended in a classic Pyrrhic victory. Roosevelt succeeded in forcing changes in the federal judiciary, though not by his preferred means; and his very pursuit of that objective so badly hurt him politically that with the denouement of the celebrated “Court fight” the curtain effectively rang down on the New Deal itself. Rejecting a constitutional amendment as too drastic and too time-consuming, Roosevelt called simply for a statute that would allow him to appoint one additional justice to the Supreme Court, up to a total of six, for every justice who declined to retire at age seventy; additionally, he asked for authority on a like basis to name up to forty-four new judges to the lower federal courts. All this he justified in the name of judicial efficiency and the need to clear crowded dockets. There was nothing sacred about the nine-justice court that Roosevelt was

seeking to enlarge; at various other times in the Court’s history Congress had specified five, six, seven, and ten justices. But Roosevelt’s message to Congress also hinted at his ideological and political exasperation, cloaked in language that would chafe a later generation as “ageist”—language that in fact caused Roosevelt ample problems at the time. “Aged or infirm judges” (“A subject of delicacy,” Roosevelt conceded) were inclined “to avoid an examination of complicated and changed conditions. . . . older men, assuming that the scene is the same as it was in the past, cease to explore or inquire into the present or the future.”

What Roosevelt called judicial reform his critics quickly dubbed “Court-packing.” The critics turned out to be astonishingly numerous. Despite widespread resentment of the Court’s curbs on legislatures, the prospect of tampering with the delicate and time-honored balance of constitutional powers aroused a ferociously hostile response. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes composed a stinging rebuttal to Roosevelt’s charges of inefficiency. “More judges to hear, more judges to confer, more judges to discuss, more judges to be convinced and to decide,” Hughes said, hardly constituted a formula for more-expeditious litigation. Aged senators understandably bristled at Roosevelt’s aspersions on the faculties of their entire age cohort. And it did not dignify Roosevelt’s case that the New Deal’s most reliable ally on the Court was the eighty-year-old Louis Brandeis. Even Roosevelt’s usually faithful liberal supporters deserted him. In a career otherwise marked by matchless political wizardry, Roosevelt here committed an enormously costly political error. Most historians date the beginning of the end of the New Deal from the repercussions of the Court-reform proposal. The conservative opposition to Roosevelt crystallized around the Court issue, and forced the abandonment or attenuation of further reform effort. Deep irony attended this turn of events, because even though the Court fight cost Roosevelt his political momentum in 1937, in the end it cleared the constitutional path for further advances.

As it happened, “the Nine Old Men” proved nimble enough to reverse their constitutional ground in March of 1937. In *West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parrish*, the Court upheld a Washington State mini-

mum-wage law effectively identical to the New York law it had invalidated in *Tipaldo* a year earlier. The key to this reversal was the shift of a single vote. Justice Owen Roberts had previously sided with the notoriously conservative "Four Horsemen"—Justices James C. McReynolds, George Sutherland, Willis Van Devanter, and Pierce Butler—but now he joined Justices Brandeis, Benjamin N. Cardozo, Stone, and Hughes in a majority that conferred its constitutional blessing on New Deal legislation. This was the famous "switch in time that saved nine," a judicial pirouette that put an end to Roosevelt's Court-packing plan even as it introduced a new constitutional era. "By nodding his head instead of shaking it," one commentator wrote, "Owen Roberts, one single human being, had amended the Constitution of the United States." William Leuchtenburg succinctly concludes,

Never again did the Supreme Court strike down a New Deal law, and from 1937 to the present, it has not overturned a single piece of significant national or state socioeconomic legislation. Many commentators believe that the Court has forever abandoned its power of judicial review in this field.

The recent Supreme Court decision in the case of *United States v. Lopez*, handed down after those lines were written, may qualify that "forever," but at least with respect to economic legislation, Leuchtenburg's conclusion still stands. In this realm substantive due process was at last laid to rest. And Father Time, not legislation, eventually permitted Roosevelt to compose a Court more congenial to his views. Because of deaths and retirements, Roosevelt was able to appoint eight of the nine justices who were sitting at the time of his own death, in 1945.

AMONG the abundant virtues of this splendid collection of essays is that it explains both the irresistible pressures that pushed Roosevelt into making that fateful proposal in February of 1937 and the political consequences of the backlash that ensued, while making it clear that out of this jumble of adjudicating and politicking came nothing less than 'the Constitutional Revolution of 1937.'"

William E. Leuchtenburg is not a scholar who tosses off a term like "revolution" lightly. Indeed, he is conspicuously asso-

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Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") Can Israel survive without it?

With the "peace agreement" between Israel and the PLO, the Middle East and Israel have entered a new phase. It will inevitably lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Can Israel survive this dismemberment? Is it in the best interest of the United States?

What are the facts?

The Root of the Conflict. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. It is about Israel's very existence. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan"; it calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

The Importance of Territory. Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance. But this is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over \$50 billion of the most advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—

enormous quantities of tanks, aircraft and much more. The Arab states possess large arsenals of chemical and biological

weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single target and one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is

an indispensable line of defense. It totally controls access to Israel's heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense and to be able to peer deeply into enemy territory. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them.

Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized? Even those who want Israel to retreat to her pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the surrounding hostile

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank') Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control over the 'West Bank'."

Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum to exist. And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There

are over fifteen

Palestinian Arab terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently come to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time", neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank".

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ciated with the phrase "halfway revolution" as a description of that perennially contested moment in American history to the study of which he has devoted most of his career: the New Deal. Long the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, and for more than a decade the William Rand Kenan Jr. Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Leuchtenburg is himself now a septuagenarian, in what perhaps constitutes a subtly compounded latter-day retort to Roosevelt's animadversions upon the elderly in 1937. In a distinguished career at those two institutions he has become legendary as a trainer of graduate students, many of whom have assumed leading roles in shaping scholarly debate not only about the New Deal but about the post-Second World War period as well—the civil-rights and women's movements in particular. Countless undergraduates have been introduced to the study of the Depression years by reading his *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963), a book that was awarded both the Bancroft and Parkman prizes and has been widely acknowledged ever since as the best one-volume text on that subject. Its concluding chapter expresses this finely balanced judgment:

The New Deal achieved a more just society by recognizing groups which had been largely unrepresented—staple farmers, industrial workers, particular ethnic groups, and the new intellectual-administrative class. Yet this was still a halfway revolution; it swelled the ranks of the bourgeoisie but left many Americans—sharecroppers, slum dwellers, most Negroes—outside of the new equilibrium.

That classic text owes its popularity and longevity not least to Leuchtenburg's gifts as a writer, gifts that are on generous display in *The Supreme Court Reborn*. Drawing upon a breathtakingly wide range of manuscript sources, Leuchtenburg vivifies myriad voices out of the archival dust and orchestrates them into a high-fidelity historical symphony that enchants the reader with the rhythm and beat of the past. He is also a master of the heuristic vignette. For example, he introduces his discussion of the hazards of railroading, an issue in *Railroad Retirement Board v. Alton Railway Co.*, the rail-pension case that adumbrated Black Monday, as follows:

In the spring of 1883, a Philadelphia baseball team entirely composed of one-armed men took on a rival club of one-legged players; save for one man whose arm had been severed at Gettysburg, all of the athletes were Reading Railroad employees who had lost a limb in a work-related accident.

"The life of a railroader was fraught with danger," he goes on, a statement lifted from leaden inertness into vibrant poignancy by the driving force of that preceding anecdote.

A COLLECTION of essays, many of them occasional pieces written over a thirty-year period, is not the genre best suited to showcase Leuchtenburg's narrative skills. Some repetition is inevitable, though revisiting the same items in various essays produced in this reader a cumulative effect not unlike that achieved by Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*—a sensation of circling the subject at different speeds and altitudes, re-examining familiar material from fresh perspectives and in fresh contexts and thus understanding it anew each time.

The book in fact has a cogent and telling architecture. It begins with an essay on Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes's decision in the infamous *Buck v. Bell* case of 1927. With his memorable dictum "Three generations of imbeciles are enough," Holmes upheld a Virginia statute mandating forced sterilization of the "feeble-minded." In the ensuing decades that ruling fostered some 70,000 involuntary "Mississippi appendectomies," inflicted largely on poor white southerners, though California led the nation in coerced sterilization. In light of the sustained attack on the mischief of judicial activism which runs through virtually all the other essays, to open by discussing a case in which the Court's restraint led to egregiously reprehensible results is at once a bold and a humble gesture—bold because it confronts at the outset the problem that democracy is no prophylaxis against the legislative expression of human malice; humble because it concedes the historicity of the benign effects of judicial restraint in the specific instance of economic legislation in the particular context of the Great Depression and the New Deal. In a concluding essay Leuchtenburg finds much to admire in the post-Second World War

Court's activist incorporation of the Bill of Rights into the Fourteenth Amendment—a development that compelled the states to abandon many discriminatory practices prohibited to the federal government, and that underlay the success of the civil-rights movement. Between those two bookends he assembles his shelf of engrossing chapters chronicling the "Constitutional Revolution" of the 1930s.

The power and charm of Leuchtenburg's books owe not only to his seasoned command of the writer's craft but to another source as well: his personal experience in the Depression decade and his political allegiance to the New Deal. As Kenneth S. Lynn put it in a contentious essay in *Commentary* some years ago, Leuchtenburg, along with Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Frank Freidel, Eric Goldman, and John Morton Blum—arguably the most influential political historians writing in the postwar period—"were men who had grown up during the New Deal and had been indelibly marked by their enthusiasm for it." Lynn drew some baleful conclusions from that undisputed generational fact. In his view, "Fond memories of FDR constricted the sense of history of this group of historians," turned them into "liberal rhapsodists," robbed them of the power to think critically, and underwrote "the mediocritization of 20th-century American political history"—a blight marked, according to Lynn, by their failure to attract "the best graduate students of the period." (Candor here compels the acknowledgment that this reviewer did his graduate work with John Blum at Yale in the 1960s.) These scholars, Lynn declared,

were disabled by the political events of the 1960's and their reverberating sequels in the 1970's and 1980's. History, it would seem, betrayed a whole generation of specialists in 20th-century American political history because it smashed their working model of the American experience, as constructed by them out of the New Deal in their impressionable youth.

Lynn's indictment was overwrought, not to say downright churlish. Leuchtenburg, for one, clearly admires the New Deal but is hardly idolatrous toward it—as his judgment about a halfway revolution suggests. What's more, his tempered conclusion in *Franklin D. Roosevelt and*

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the *New Deal* about the New Deal's incompleteness may be taken as a harbinger of the principal question that has animated New Deal scholarship ever since: Why was there not even more radical change precipitated out of that moment of unprecedented trauma and apparent political opportunity in the great crisis of the 1930s? That question has informed the highly distinguished work of a successor generation of historians, including Barton J. Bernstein, at Stanford (a Freidel student); Alan Brinkley, at Columbia (another Freidel student); and William Chafe, at Duke (a Leuchtenburg student), to name just three of the scholarly progeny of that remarkable group that Lynn accused of professional sterility.

It is a sign of Leuchtenburg's continuing scholarly vitality—and the continuing fascination of the New Deal as a historical subject—that he himself has now taken up this extended examination of that paradoxical and perversely ironic moment in 1937 when a dramatic constitutional breakthrough coincided with, and even contributed to, the throttling of the very reform impulse to which the constitutional barriers were suddenly removed. This book is yet another reminder of one of the central conundrums of so much of American history, the present moment included: Why have the American people been so consistently skeptical of centralized government power, and so resourceful in finding ways to frustrate its exercise, even when that power is manifestly the only instrument commensurate with issues whose gravity is not in dispute?

The scholars of Leuchtenburg's generation measured the New Deal against the pre-Depression past, and were greatly impressed with its achievements. Their students, most of us born in the post-Depression era, have measured the New Deal against the vexatiously persistent problems of our own, post-Second World War era, and have found it wanting—perhaps even a tragically misspent opportunity, or a wrong turning. Much of the genius and grace of this book, and of William Leuchtenburg's enviably rich scholarly corpus, consists in his ability to hold those two perspectives in productive equilibrium, to acknowledge the innovativeness of the New Deal even while probing its limitations and, for better or worse, its enduring legacy. ☼

An Eighteenth- Century Voice

by Katherine A. Powers

THE COMMODORE

by Patrick O'Brian.
Norton, 282 pages,
\$22.50.

THE noise accompanying the publication this spring of *The Commodore*, the seventeenth novel in Patrick O'Brian's Napoleonic naval-war series, demonstrates that this ancient Irishman, long the object of reverence for a small, fanatically devoted sect, is now the center of a booming industry. And yet there remain cautious readers who would not consider taking up one of these volumes, believing them to be no more than deep-dish costume dramas.

"What I hadn't understood, when I began these things," O'Brian says, "was what a depraved genre it is in the general mind. It had never occurred to me that to shift the scene of a novel to another age . . . and to cast it in an English in some degrees pleasanter than the current, put me in a disreputable genre. I met some very astonishing statements—such as that I was a writer of *adventure stories*."

At the risk of alienating the self-improving reader, let me say that these books are, in fact, extraordinarily exciting, with adventure very much on the page. Patrick O'Brian is indeed the true heir of Captain Marryat (1792–1848), another witty and intelligent writer who has been tarred with the genre brush. Central to what O'Brian has called "phases of a general progression," begun in 1970, is Captain Jack Aubrey, whose name—like his bluff person—represents the very apotheosis of Englishness. Beside him, and equally central, is the surgeon Stephen Maturin, the illegitimate son of a Catalan mother and an Irish father; his name, when spelled "Mathurin" (as O'Brian pointed out to me in an interview), meant "half-wit" or "fool" in eighteenth-century France. He is

a small, pale-eyed man, a naturalist with a philosophical bent, and the opposite of, or—as it may be—complement to, his friend Aubrey.

The books, set chiefly at sea from 1800 to 1814, combine comedies of manners, moral tales, and stories of naval domesticity, technology, and war. O'Brian laments having started the series so late in the Napoleonic wars, for he was forced to insert a gusset in time, sending his heroes off to the Southern Hemisphere to pursue activities outside the theater of war and free from the constraints of European history. And although they return to England in the present work, Aubrey and Maturin quickly leave again, now with Aubrey sailing at the head of a squadron under a commodore's pennant with orders to intercept slavers off the coast of West Africa. Their precise whereabouts in history remain obscure.

Aside from being known as a writer who hit the jackpot in his eighth decade, O'Brian is notorious for having made something of a fetish of his privacy. Stories abound of his brisk and brutal treatment of those who have attempted to winkle out details of his personal affairs. His notion of the personal is pretty strict. "A woman to whom I had never been introduced," he told me with distaste, "leant over the table the other day and said, 'Where were you born?'" He stiffened, outraged at the memory. "I mean, for God's sake! And that was in tolerably decent company!"

If this seems, well . . . peculiar, the author's disgust with familiarity and emotional excess is part of what makes the antique setting conducive to his art. He observes that the generally well-educated man of the time was not only more optimistic than his modern counterpart but "probably very much better mannered; I don't think he would have asked direct personal questions." Though, properly speaking, the Aubrey-Maturin novels are set in the early nineteenth century, O'Brian considers the eighteenth-century era to have persisted up to 1825, "with some strange early Victorianism starting round about 1800, with the evangelicals." Self-righteousness, emotionalism, and overfamiliarity would pretty well sum up his assessment of the evangelical contribution to civilization.

In an autobiographical essay in *Patrick O'Brian: Critical Essays and a Bibliog-*

raphy (1994), edited by Arthur Cunningham, O'Brian mentions neither when nor where he was born. (It was 1914 and, according to one report, in Galway.) His mother died when he was young, and he was sent to "more or less willing relatives in Connemara and the County Clare and . . . some family friends in England." He was a sickly child, and was educated mainly at home by a governess and tutors. He spent a good deal of time at sea in boats belonging to family and friends, including a barque-rigged merchantman converted to an oceangoing yacht, which he helped to crew.

These nautical junkets were curtailed, it seems, by the Depression of the 1930s, a calamity that forced people to learn, "sometimes successfully, how to live and even entertain without servants to wait at table, cook, wash up, make beds: a civilisation that had never been known before and one that spread a certain gloom." "For my own part," O'Brian observes gamely, "I carried on writing—it had never occurred to me to do anything else." During the Second World War he drove ambulances in Chelsea and engaged in British intelligence work with his wife, Mary, to whom most of his books are dedicated. How they met and when they were married is not touched upon. However, he readily admits to tea drinking, to writing "with pen and ink like a Christian," and to possessing a little vineyard and an abhorrence of unannounced visitors. He lives in comparative seclusion in the Roussillon region of France, and confesses that he knows

little of present-day Dublin or London or Paris, even less of post-modernity, post-structuralism, hard rock or rap, and . . . cannot write with much conviction about the contemporary scene. Yet I do have some comments, some observations to offer on the *condition humaine* that may be sound or at least of some interest, and it seems to me that they are best made in the context of a world that I know. . . . a valid world so long as it is inhabited by human beings rather than by lay figures in period clothing.

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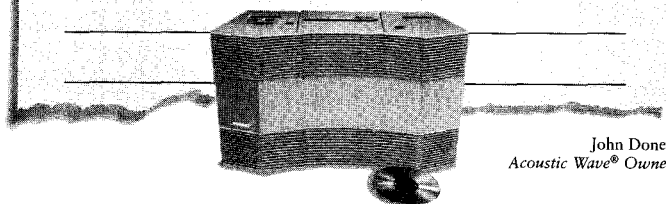
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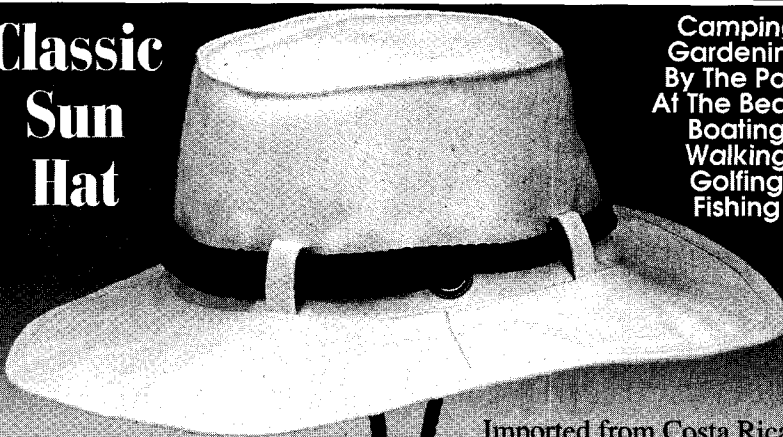
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21. MAN(AG)E 22. TRANSIT (anag.) 23. ANGST (hidden) Down. 1. DROPLET (anag.)
2. GO-A-LIE 3. ST-RUT 4. BERM (hidden) 5. TO-WED 6. TRI(B)ES 7. S(T)EED
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(homophone) 19. MANTA (hidden) 21. MUST (double def.) Pieces. a. N(A-US)EA
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like any other writer of historical novels, he truly belongs to the era in which the majority of his works are set.

Isolated from the contemporary world as a child, O'Brian read chiefly eighteenth-century literature, most particularly the works of Richardson, Johnson, and Austen. He also went through a considerable run of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, an eighteenth-century journal once edited by Dr. Johnson, which he found in a trunk. In this way, one might say, he replicated the quotidian experience of a literate eighteenth-century man. His fastidiousness about social form approximates an eighteenth-century sensibility, and he resists to the end being propelled into the role of a "funny wonder": a creature defined by him as "a chap who stands aside listening to himself, holding himself out for admiration."

O'Brian's writing builds a bridge between the centuries that starts, it really seems, at the distant shore, projecting the understandings of the eighteenth century into the twentieth. And although many of the sea battles that occur in his pages are drawn from history, as is every detail of life on land and sea, his is not primarily a historical project. When I asked if he has any of the aims of the historian, he answered with a flat "No." He is, he said, an artist, "first, last, and all the time." In this way he can be distinguished from the growing ranks of academic and intellectual dabblers in historical fiction such as Susan Sontag and the historian Simon Schama, whose last work, *Dead Certainities*, was written as a novel, though his publisher refused to promote it as such.

Intellectual novel writers like these have hermeneutics in the heart. Not a bad thing to have there, to be sure, but their works seem to involve a good deal of gesticulation from the margins. In other words, is this art or is it a piece of ventriloquism? What is salient about O'Brian's eighteenth-century voice is that it is a voice and it is his.

His language transcends pastiche, even style—O'Brian himself employs the expression "prose rhythm" to describe it. Prose rhythm, he says, lies at the heart of writing. It is a writer's individual cadence, a thing quite different from style. If style is a writer's choice of words, he maintains, prose rhythm is the order in which he sets the words and the spaces between them. As an example of bril-

liantly inimitable prose rhythm he quotes Samuel Johnson and his famous rebuff of Lord Chesterfield:

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it.

"Many people, alas, imitated Johnson's style," O'Brian says. "None that I know of was capable of imitating his essential rhythm, without which Johnsonese is heavy, turgid, laborious, and pompous."

One does not get many pages into the Aubrey-Maturin sequence before falling under the spell of O'Brian's prose, which is coiling and uncoiling, spare, elegantly paced, quietly witty, punctuated by colons at every turn. His control is extraordinary, and like Jack Aubrey, who can extract three well-directed broadsides from his gunnery crews in five minutes, O'Brian is not averse to the occasional display of wondrous proficiency. The second sentence in *The Commodore* runs to 128 perfectly handled words; on the next page a mighty specimen unwinds gracefully to an astounding 206 words without sacrificing a jot of lucidity. Throughout the book these great linguistic serpents emerge for our inspection and delight.

O'Brian's choice of words is pure eighteenth-century, but the actual note he hits is uniquely his own. One example, short but representative of his rhythm and irony, will have to serve: referring to an operation, a cystotomy, with which Maturin assists in *The Fortune of War*, he writes, "The operation, performed on an immensely obese, timid patient, was far more intricate than they had expected; yet finally it was done, and not only was it successful in itself, but there was a real likelihood that the man might live."

Even when describing terrible and doleful deeds, the writing is joyous, and one is not surprised to learn that the author gets intense pleasure from creating these books. Indeed, O'Brian claims that he wrote his first eighteenth-century nautical novel, *The Golden Ocean*, in about six weeks, "laughing most of the time."

O'BRIAN'S work has two great themes: form and mutability as they apply to human relations and to the constitution of character. These, of course, are the predominant concerns of eighteenth-century man, and O'Brian has created a little world for them to operate in. A sailing ship, he has explained,

provided a hot-house atmosphere in which the plants of good and evil, liking and hatred, close comradeship and its reverse, could grow fast and without distraction from outside sources: there being no outside sources, apart from the weather and the enemy, neither of them admittedly negligible.

Captain Jack Aubrey, a Marryat-style Tory who constantly invokes "the immemorial custom of the service," may be said to be the apologist of form—to such a degree that he declares, in *The Wine-Dark Sea*, "Wars are conducted according to certain forms. They are not wild riots in which anyone may join and seize whatever he can overpower."

That form governs all in naval society provides one of the numerous running jokes in these books. Aboard Aubrey's frigate, the *Surprise*, a young officer instructs a midshipman in the proper designation of ships:

"All of 'em you see . . . is what we call twelve-hundred-tonners; though to be sure some gauges thirteen and even fifteen hundred ton, Thames measurement. *Wexford*, there . . . she does: but we call her a twelve hundred ton ship."

"Sir, might it not be simpler to call her a fifteen hundred ton ship?"

"Simpler, maybe: but it would never do. You don't want to be upsetting the old ways. Oh dear me, no. God's my life, if the Captain was to hear you carrying on in that reckless Jacobin, democratical line, why, I dare say he would turn you adrift on a three-inch plank, with both your ears nailed down to it. . . . No, no: you don't want to go arsing around with the old ways: the French did so, and look at the scrape it has gotten them into."

Even though Jack Aubrey is generally good-natured, a natural leader, and a man in whom nature's various summonses are direct and answered more often than not, he understands that nature is not benign. Civility and law are matters of form based on tradition and custom, not nature. It is thus most extraordinarily amusing that,



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for instance, his mother-in-law, Mrs. Williams, is "a woman, in the natural course of things; but . . . so emphatically, so totally a woman, that she was almost devoid of any private character." She is, in fact, a powerful female force operating according to the same principles that govern the world of the spider and the fly.

Stephen Maturin, the deeper man of the two friends, is the great observer and respecter of mutability. The view he takes of it encompasses both the seventeenth-century notion that identified change with decay and the late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notion that linked it with evolution and growth. Maturin is particularly alive to the decay or development of character, and he has an almost existential appreciation for the nature of identity and freedom, seeing form itself as the enemy of the latter. "It has often seemed to me," he writes in his journal in *Master and Commander*,

that towards this period [their mid-thirties]. . . men strike out their permanent characters; or have those characters struck into them. Merriment, roaring high spirits before this: then some chance concatenation, or some hidden predilection (or rather inherent bias) working through, and the man is in the road he cannot leave but must go on, making it deeper and deeper (a groove, or channel), until he is lost in his mere character—persona—no longer human, but an accretion of qualities belonging to this character. James Dillon was a delightful being. Now he is closing in. It is odd—will I say heart-breaking?—how cheerfulness goes: gaiety of mind, natural free-springing joy. Authority is its great enemy—the assumption of authority. I know few men over fifty that seem to me entirely human: virtually none who has long exercised authority.

Are these now seventeen books consistently good? Alas, mutability holds sway here, too. Before *The Commodore* the books had begun to move toward practical manuals of the sea, with explanations of naval arcana appearing where previously the reader would have been left—more happily, if less knowledgeably—to his own devices. In addition, many more pages from the naturalist's notebook had begun to appear. O'Brian's descriptions of natural phenomena and the creatures of the earth are superb, but had become less wedded to the narrative than they once were.

The Wine-Dark Sea, for instance, the book that precedes the present one, includes descriptions of the condor that are all very splendid until compared with the description of the praying mantis in *Master and Commander*, the first book in the series.

The Commodore, to be sure, is not overly larded with descriptions of flora, fauna, and nautica. Nonetheless, the narrative shows a lot of daylight through the weave, the plot being a fairly aimless affair of incidents rather than a sustained unfolding of events. Nor is there much revelatory

interaction between men and circumstances; the characters are not so much realized as acknowledged, recognized from long acquaintance.

Reduced in excellence though they may be, the last few additions to the Aubrey-Maturin series still stand above most fiction being written today. They and this series as a whole serve to remind us that, as O'Brian's hero Dr. Johnson pointed out, "The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it." ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



The Sea of Galilee Boat

by Shelley Wachsmann.
Plenum, 444 pages, \$24.95.

In January of 1986 the Lufan brothers, of Kibbutz Ginosar, on the northwest banks of the Sea of Galilee, reported their discovery of what looked like the remains of an old boat stuck in the mud flats that had appeared when the lake's water level fell in response to a drought. Mr. Wachsmann, an archaeologist experienced in Mediterranean diving work, was sent to investigate. It was indeed an old boat—roughly 2,000 years old. Mr. Wachsmann's account of the resurrection of this unique relic records a fine mixture of improvisation, unexpected help, near disaster, and random interference. Word of the find got out early, inspiring press reports of "the Jesus boat"; the usual rumors of sunken treasure; a small turf war; and the arrival of TV teams, tourists, pilgrims, and rubberneckers, followed by the appearance of a truck-based refreshment stand. Mr. Wachsmann and his largely volunteer crew meanwhile burrowed in the mud and worried about rising water, for the drought had ended. There is more to the text than digging. Mr. Wachsmann includes Galilean legends, comparisons with other archaeological sites, information about ceramic styles and dating methods, and

local history derived from the Romanized Jew Josephus Flavius, whose work Mr. Wachsmann compares to a history of the American Revolution by Benedict Arnold. Archaeology is known to be hard work. With limited time and funds it can be considered epic. The recovery of the Galilee boat was an epic enterprise.

Claude Monet

by Paul Hayes Tucker.
Yale, 260 pages, \$40.00.

Professor Tucker is well aware that books about Monet are frequent and, thanks to Monet himself, usually beautiful. But is there anything new to be written about the painter's life, as opposed to the display of his work? Professor Tucker believes he has found a new point—Monet's money. By examining surviving sales records he has determined that except for one brief period, Monet's income compared favorably with that of doctors and lawyers, although the artist "would continue to claim he was penniless and beg friends for spare change." The author attributes that practice to extravagance, a habit of living the good life and spending more than he had. Professor Tucker does not, however, attempt any estimate of Monet's professional expenses for paint, canvas, and travel on his sometimes prolonged forays in search

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of subject matter; nor does he consider the erratic timing of a painter's sales and the payment for them. The author's discussion of Monet's choice of motifs and their relation to social and political aspects of the time is useful. His attempts to find revelations of Monet's domestic life in the canvases end in useless speculation. The book's illustrations are generous and predictably a visual delight.

Of Love and Other Demons

by *Gabriel García Márquez*,
translated by *Edith Grossman*.
Knopf, 147 pages, \$21.00.

Love is the least of the demons at large in Mr. Márquez's ironically titled novel about decaying Spanish control in a Latin American colony. The time appears to be the eighteenth century, and the action presents the extensive and eerie effects of a bite by a rabid dog. Like most of Mr. Márquez's work, the novel is provocative, multi-faceted, and brilliantly readable.

Epitaph for a Peach

by *David Mas Masumoto*.
HarperSanFrancisco, 237 pages,
\$20.00.

Mr. Masumoto is a third-generation Japanese agriculturalist in California, where he owns and operates a peach and grape farm. His endangered peach is the Sun Crest, which is everything a peach should be in flavor, perfume, juiciness, and texture. His lyrical description of this fine fruit is enough to make a peach lover drool and also weep, for the Sun Crest has no shelf life and is therefore rejected by those shippers who provide chain stores with the pretty-colored, flawless-skinned, rock-hard, and tasteless objects that achieve punky decay but never edibility. Mr. Masumoto decided to gamble four seasons on defense of his Sun Crests, and his account of the battle covers the pleasures and perils of fruit farming where nature intended a desert. It includes small triumphs over insect invaders and total defeat by rain on the raisin crop; the cohesion of a multi-generation family work team and the unkind neighborly competition for hired crews; childhood memories and meditations on the character of dumps. Anyone who thinks farming is dull will have that view corrected by Mr. Masumoto's charming and often exciting

tale, and anyone who deplores the disappearance of truly good fruit will share his distress over the substitution of mere endurance for fine quality.

The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon

edited and with an introduction
by *Elliott Ashkenazi*.
Louisiana State, 504 pages,
\$34.95.

Clara Solomon, of New Orleans, kept a diary through parts of 1861 and 1862, but it is less interesting than one would expect of the period when her city fell to the Federals. She was a teenager, excessively sentimental even by nineteenth-century standards, and unconnected with any reliable source of information. The diary does reveal a good deal about immediate practical problems such as food shortages, the difficulty of finding shoes, the complications arising from the disappearance of small change, and the discomfort of female dress. Hoops and corsets were an abomination, and bonnets were no pleasure. Clara also reveals a society of semi-assimilated Jews among whom social protocol was so closely observed that failure to present a pot of freshly made preserves to a neighbor could rankle for months. Clara provides much detail potentially useful to a historical novelist, but little of value beyond that.

And When Did You Last See Your Father?

by *Blake Morrison*.
Picador, 224 pages, \$21.00.

Mr. Morrison's memoir is in memory of and in tribute to his late father, a prosperous doctor with a character full of contradictions. "The unsnobbish protector and defender of 'ordinary decent folk' . . . was acutely aware of his social status; the sentimental family man could be a bully and tyrant; the open-hearted extrovert had a trove of secrets and hang-ups." The doctor died, wretchedly, of cancer, a process that his son describes in macabre detail. The book as a whole suggests that Mr. Morrison is only partly aware of the degree of his resentment against the heavy paternal hand. It is a convincing account of family tensions, but it is not agreeable reading.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



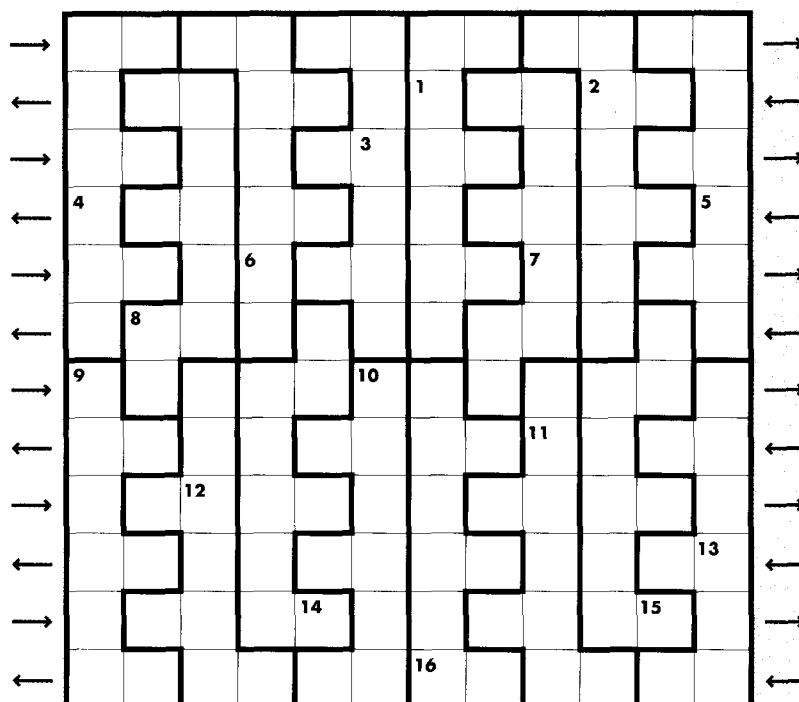
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Patchwork

This puzzle diagram is a thing of Threads (clue answers a–r) and Patches (areas numbered 1–16). Solvers must determine the starting point for entry of the Threads, which weave across the grid in the order in which their clues are given, alternating direction from one row to the next, as shown by the arrows. A word exiting the diagram at the lower left will continue in the upper left corner. Each nine-letter Patch's first letter belongs in its numbered square (these letters should help in weaving the Threads); the remaining Patch letters are to be entered in mixed order. Answers include two capitalized words.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 94.



Threads

- a. Crazy quilts are things given in compensation
- b. Take off about one ounce, getting back in shape
- c. Woodwind was brilliant, covering one unknown opus
- d. Elected official was wearing underwear he had thoughtfully changed?
- e. Chewed or left piece of broccoli or cauliflower
- f. Shows insects on the back of leaf
- g. A huge number of doctors acquiring breezy backing
- h. Instant support of a motion
- i. Not so docile around elephant's primary handler
- j. Go like a bat's female offspring
- k. Proteins from sponge filling cracked nails
- l. Writes about American knights' fights

- m. Shark was very dramatic, swallowing ostrich-like bird
- n. Political film rehabilitated thirties musician
- o. One of the team leaders fitting into crack, maybe, almost
- p. Summer house encompassing one common flavor
- q. 9-pound boxes Democrat brought back to be camouflaged (*two words*)
- r. Breaks up college clubs infiltrated by federal agents

Patches

- 1. Goal of a place like Amsterdam, to Rev. Spooner?
- 2. *Evergreen* playwright penning *Northern Sky*
- 3. Gets rid of black boxes, going around this way
- 4. Time degrades woolens, ultimately—like some gloves
- 5. Quit after Athletics pitcher pitched?
- 6. Northerner I make damaging statements about, you might say
- 7. Gallant gentlemen and great boxer among spelunkers
- 8. De Palma embraces Minnelli on return from a South American country
- 9. A steward's putting English at the front, looking into the rising sun
- 10. Ceremony in African country held by two score
- 11. Put a stop to wrath's risks
- 12. Fool around with hip new spacecraft
- 13. Carriers of disease on swine in sties
- 14. Completed *Flipper* article Taylor edited
- 15. Rough ape-like creature straddling draft animal
- 16. Nickname for quite some lump of coal?

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

IMPROVISATION

by J. E. Lighter

The Slang of Summer

WHEN the young Jane Austen offhandedly mentioned something called baseball in *Northanger Abbey* around 1800, she could not have imagined the major-league difficulties that would face the strike-afflicted American national pastime of the same name in the 1990s. (The word *strike*, coincidentally, developed the sense of a labor action during Austen's lifetime.) Austen, of course, was referring to the English game known as rounders, which had been derived from the more complicated English game of cricket. American baseball, in turn, was instituted by Alexander Cartwright in 1845 as an embellished variant of rounders. (The once-cherished legend that Abner Doubleday invented baseball at Coopers-town, New York, in 1839 was long ago punctured by historians.)

Whereas a football may be called a *pigskin*, and a basketball a *rock*, the stitched "leather-covered sphere" of Ernest Lawrence Thayer's "Casey at the Bat" (1888) has long been a *horsehide*, the *old apple*, or the *pill*. This last word, now also applied to a golf ball, was once a well-established term for a bullet or a cannonball. In baseball, of course, a *bullet* is a ball whizzing through the air as a line drive (or *frozen rope* to aficionados of metaphor), a throw (or *peg*) that barely *nails* a runner, or a fastball, baseball's glamour pitch, which commentators are wont to describe as traveling at *mach speed*. An *aspirin tablet* crosses the plate (that is, the *dish*) so fast that its size is reduced by a mystical combination of friction and the Fitzgerald contraction, rendering it unhittable.

Nowadays a *cannon* is likely to be a throwing arm, especially if strong and accurate: said of a defensive player, "He's got a *cannon*" needs no elaboration for the true *fan*. *Fan*, for its part, is the now-standard

word for what people in the 1880s called a *crank*. (*Fan* is a shortened form of *fanatic*, which derives from a Latin word connoting religious excess. *Crank*, in the sense of a crazy or eccentric person, is from the sixteenth-century English *crank*, a crook or

er—its etymology (like its precise destination) unknown.

Fenway Park, in Boston, opened in 1912 (the very first ball was thrown out by the mayor, whose daughter, whom we would later know as Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, was at his side), but its looming left-field wall, the *Green Monster*, didn't get that name till long after mid-century. The monster will keep a rocketing fair ball in play, and Red Sox fielders may always have led the American League in playing *off the wall*, a phrase that in the 1960s came to allude to eccentricity. The general slang sense may well stem from the startling rebound of a long fly ball. I once heard an erratic college classmate referred to as being *off the wall for extra bases*, a memorable if inconclusive hint as to the slang sense's possible ball-park origins. Jealousy, the "green-eyed monster," may have played a role in the naming of Fenway's great wall.

It is the players, rather than the architectural peculiarities of ball parks, that most often get nicknames. The sobriquets "Yogi" Berra, "Vinegar Bend" Mizell, and "Blue Moon" Odom enrich the recollections of many. And consider the pitcher Emil Bildilli, of the old St. Louis Browns. During his brief major-league career (1937–1941) Bildilli, born in Diamond, Indiana, was felicitously dubbed "Hill Billy." The *hill*, as everyone knows, has long been slang for the pitcher's mound.

Whether played on fields of dreams or acres of avarice, America's "summer game," as the journalist Roger Angell has called it, has furnished some pretty rich loam for the growth of language. *Playing hardball* (literally, baseball as opposed to softball) may be the most thoroughly characteristic American metaphor of the past thirty years. But baseball lingo flew out of the park long before that.



*Investigations of slang
by the editor of the
Random House Historical Dictionary
of American Slang*

bend.) But unpredictability being typical of words, fastball pitchers aren't usually credited with having *cannons*, though they do *groove heat*.

There are people who regard any pitch that is not a fastball or a curve as *junk* (whose sense of "worthless scrap" comes from the fifteenth-century English *jonk*, an old or inferior cable or rope); Ed Lopat made his name in the 1940s as a *junkball* pitcher, or *junkman*, for the New York Yankees. The *ephus ball*, originally associated with Rip Sewell, of the 1942 Pittsburgh Pirates, is a kind of high parabolic slow slid-

150 miles a day. 20,000 miles a year. Potholes. Mountains.
Wind. Downpours. Sleet.
As Tom Schuler sees it, what's the big deal?

See, unlike the other members of the Saturn Cycling Team, manager Tom Schuler gets to tool around in a Saturn SW2. Air conditioning. A place to put your drink. That's the way to spend a race day.

Actually, this ironman-turned-businessman has earned a cushy ride. A pro cyclist for ten years, Tom's spent the last season guiding the Saturn team to its most successful season ever.



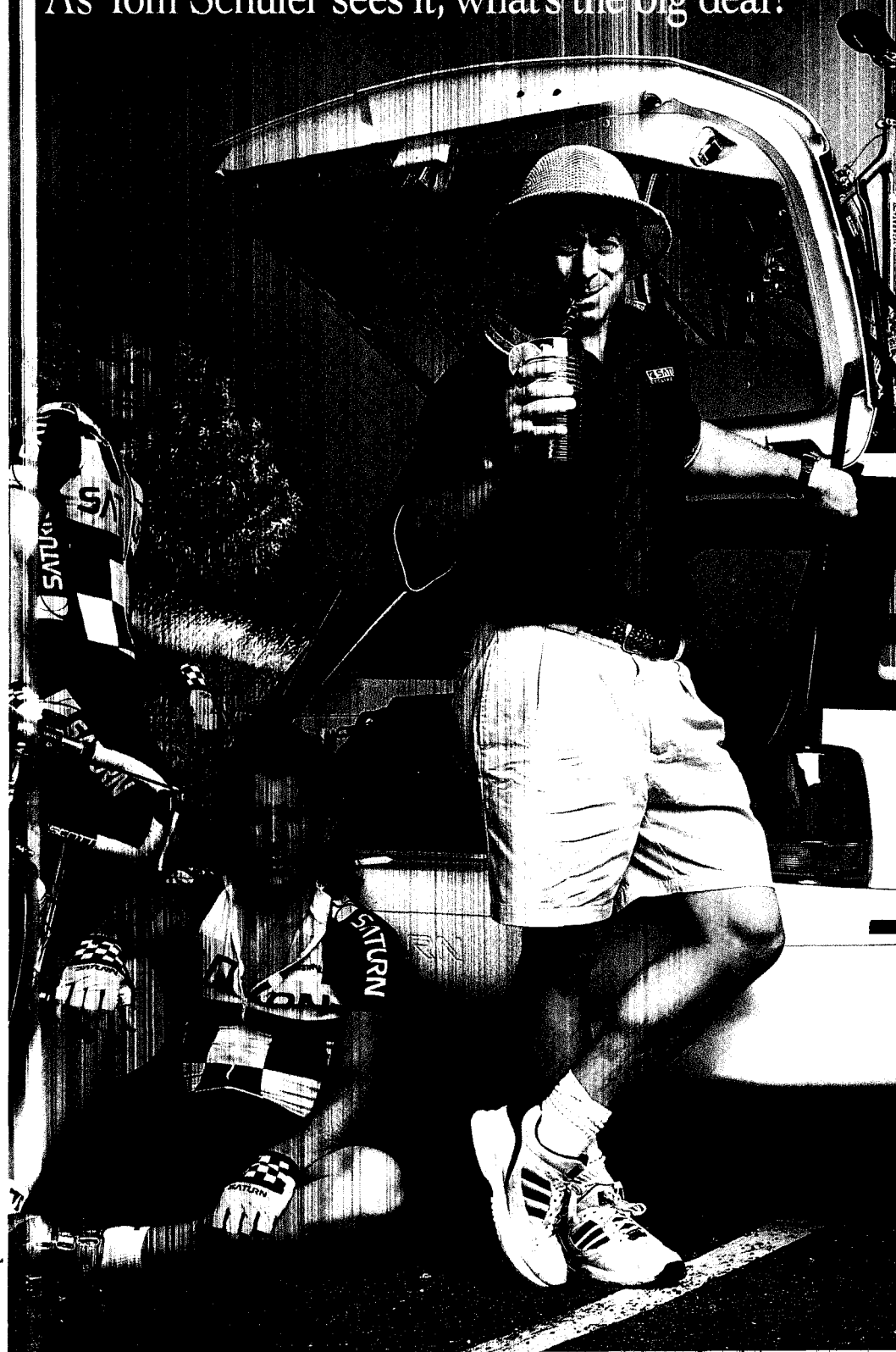
The cyclists put 20,000 miles a year on their two-wheelers but Tom puts *four times* that many on his Saturn in strenuous conditions. Yet, with a 16-valve dual-overhead-cam engine that produces 124 horsepower—and even an electronically controlled automatic transmission that adjusts to different driving conditions—the wagon is ready to ride every day.

Yeah, until a bicycle offers lumbar support, armrests and wipers, Tom will take the Saturn any day. Anyone for another hill?



A Different Kind of Company. A Different Kind of Car.

Tom Schuler is pictured with a 1994 Saturn SW2. M.S.R.P. for the 1995 Saturn SW2 is \$14,725, including retailer prep, air conditioning, automatic transmission and alloy wheels. Tax, license, transportation and other options are extra. For more information on Saturn cars, please call us any time at 1 800 522 5000 ©1994 Saturn Corporation





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